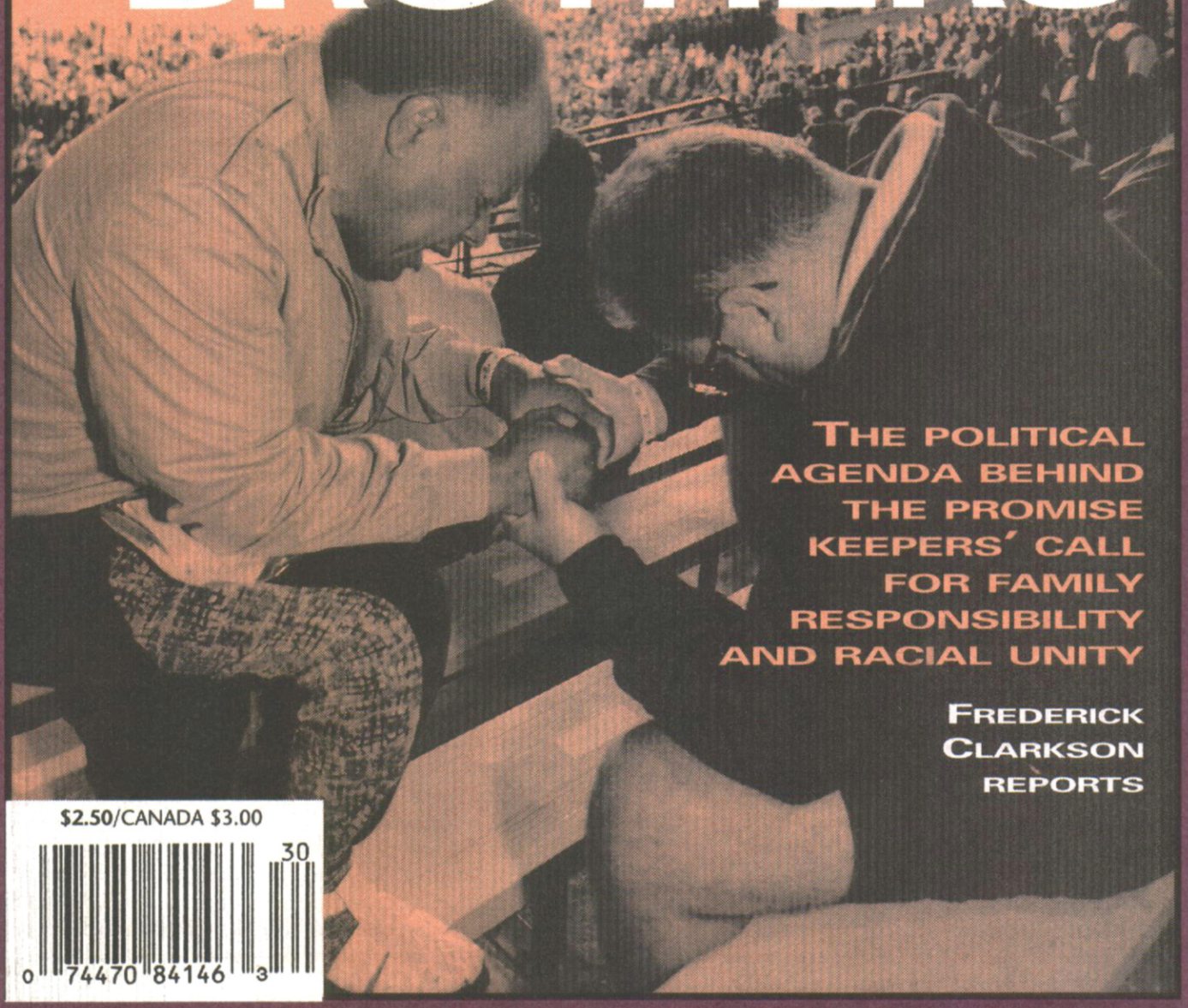
TOM FRANK REVIEWS *THE WEEKLY STANDARD*

August 5-18, 1996

# In THESE TIMES

## RIGHTEOUS BROTHERS



THE POLITICAL AGENDA BEHIND THE PROMISE KEEPERS' CALL FOR FAMILY RESPONSIBILITY AND RACIAL UNITY

FREDERICK CLARKSON REPORTS

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EDITORIAL

# ROSS PEROT AND THE DECLINE OF DEMOCRACY

Forty-eight hours after former Colorado Gov. Dick Lamm announced that he would seek the Reform Party's presidential nomination, Ross Perot rushed over to Larry King's CNN studio to announce that "The American people want me to do this. I worked day and night for the last five years on this subject. ... If anybody should do it, I should do it and I will do it, and I'm in a unique position to do it."

What this tells us is that no one can fault Perot for lacking an ego, or for lacking the hundreds of millions of dollars that can enable an eccentric CEO to be taken seriously as a presidential contender. Perot also demonstrates an acute understanding of politics—as it is now played on the national scene—as simply a matter of individual personality.

Four years ago, these factors worked well for Perot. Running against George Bush and Bill Clinton, he became a magnet for those who could stomach neither of the wafflers, and who were attracted by his simple certitude. Perot was also helped by his strong opposition to NAFTA, by his harping on the faux issue of the federal deficit, and by the $60 million of his own money that he spent on the campaign.

This year, with his two major issues pretty much off the screen and with Clinton slyly manipulating the advantages of incumbency, Perot will not garner the 18.9 percent of the vote he received in 1992. Nevertheless, Perot may get as much as 15 percent, and he is still likely to attract voters from both parties.

Significantly, Perot's 1992 vote did not come from any clear constituency, or from any particular region of the country. And although Perot got a higher percentage of the vote than any other third-party candidate since Theodore Roosevelt, he didn't carry a single state. In 1912, Roosevelt got 88 electoral votes, and in 1924, Sen. Robert M. La Follette, with only 16 percent of the vote, got 13. Unlike Perot, both Roosevelt and La Follette led coherent political groups with clearly defined constituencies. They were products of social movements that had distinct interests and a history of opposing other tendencies within the Republican Party. In short, although both Roosevelt and La Follette were well-known individuals, they were also the representatives of large numbers of citizens who had come together as active participants in civil society.

Perot, on the other hand, represents the degeneration of civil society and of the democratic political process. In 1992, desperate for a candidate who was more than the tool of corporate interests or other perceived special interest groups, many Americans rallied to Perot because he had so much money that he was dependent on no one, and on nothing. He didn't have to bend his knee to PACs or even to the media. He was his own man.

But democratic politics is not about choosing unattached, and therefore unaccountable, individuals. It is, or should be, about citizen participation in a genuine process of formulating programs and policy. Only candidates who are committed to those programs and policies, and who are accountable to the organizations that nominate them, should contest for office.

***Ross Perot's political ascent represents the degeneration of civil society.***

Sadly, and perhaps fatally for our democracy, Perot is unique only as a distillation of tendencies that have equally affected the major parties. In fact, as we have previously argued, the Republicans and Democrats are less parties than parts of the state apparatus. On the one hand, members of any group can join them simply by registering or voting in the party primaries. And as such, both parties can be coalitions of organizations, interest groups and movements.

On the other hand, except for the Christian Coalition operating within the Republican Party, there have been few organized participants in the inner life of our major parties. Television and access to corporate money have become greater and greater determining factors in who gets nominated and elected. Clinton, for example, succeeded in 1992 because he won the big money contest and got the support of the corporate media before the first primary took place.

In principle, Clinton's strategy is not significantly different from Perot's course of action. Indeed, Perot's mistake was in running as a third-party candidate instead of simply buying one of the major parties. ◄



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"...with liberty and justice for all"

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*In These Times* (ISSN 0160-5992) is published biweekly by the Institute for Public Affairs, 2040 N. Milwaukee Ave., Chicago, IL 60647. Subscriptions are $36.95 a year ($59 for institutions; $61.95 Canada; $75.95 overseas). Second-class postage paid at Chicago, IL and at additional mailing offices. Postmaster: Send address changes to *In These Times*, 308 E. Hitt St., Mt. Morris, IL 61054. This issue (Vol. 20, No. 19) published August 5, 1996 for newsstand sales August 5-18, 1996. (312) 772-0100. Member: Alternative Press Syndicate. The entire contents of *In These Times* are copyright © 1996 by the Institute for Public Affairs, and may not be reproduced in any manner, either in whole or in part, without permission of the publisher. Copies of *In These Times'* contract with the National Writers Union are available upon request. Complete issues and volumes of *In These Times* are available from University Microfilms International, Ann Arbor, MI. All rights reserved. *In These Times* is indexed in both the Alternative Press Index and the Left Index. Publisher does not assume liability for unsolicited manuscripts or material. Manuscripts or material unaccompanied by stamped, self-addressed envelope will not be returned. All correspondence should be sent to: *In These Times*, 2040 N. Milwaukee Ave., Chicago, IL 60647. E-mail: itt@igc.apc.org. For customer service and to place subscription orders, call toll free: (800) 827-0270. Advertising rates sent on request. Available back issues are $5 each; specify volume and number. All letters received by *In These Times* become property of the newspaper. We reserve the right to print letters in condensed form.

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# In THESE TIMES

CONTENTS

**Volume 20, Number 19**



## Righteous brothers

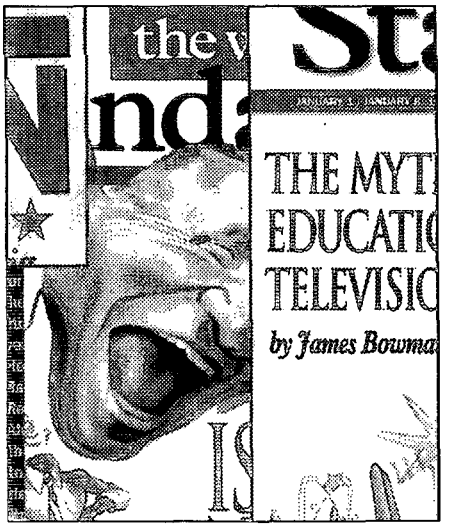
*Are the Promise Keepers renewing family values or advancing the agenda of the Christian right?*
FREDERICK CLARKSON
14

## A weak read

The Weekly Standard
*aspires to weighty cultural commentary—and fails.*
TOM FRANK
18

## Gotta match?

*Clinton's anti-smoking measures echo tobacco industry propaganda.*
MIKE MALES
24




### FEATURES

**The First Stone: The great dolphin divide** ◦ Joel Bleifuss ..... 12
**Russia reneges on democracy** ◦ Fred Weir ..... 21
**Beyond the minimum wage** ◦ G. Pascal Zachary ..... 27

### REVIEWS

**Film: *Trainspotting*** ◦ Linda DeLibero ..... 30
**In Print: *Selling Culture*** ◦ John Palattella ..... 32
***1910*** • Catherine Mason ..... 35

### DEPARTMENTS

**Letters** ..... 4
**Sylvia** · Nicole Hollander ..... 4
**In Short** ..... 6
**Appall-O-Meter** · David Futrelle ..... 7
**Media Watch** · Thomas Goetz ..... 9
**Tomorrow's news** · Steve Brodner ..... 9
**Huge Mouth** · Peter Hannan ..... 11
**Classifieds** ..... 37



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# LETTERS

win 100 percent of representation, but in fact, barely a quarter of the voters are needed to elect a legislative majority, which then wields 100 percent of political power in most matters. With preference voting, it takes a majority of voters, expressing its true preference, to elect a legislative majority.

**Paul Rosenberg**
Executive Director
Reason & Democracy
Long Beach, Cal.

## True representation

It's good to see any discussion of proportional representation (PR), but Rob Richie undersells its remarkable benefits in his July 8 article, "A proportional solution."

First, "proportional representation" is actually a redundant term: Without proportionality, there is no representation. A Republican does not represent me in Congress, but the current system pretends that one does. A representative legislature should represent the electorate—all of it, not just the majority.

Second, the most important concept here is that of "wasted" votes—those cast that are not used to elect a representative. Under our current system, all votes for a losing candidate are obviously wasted, but so are all votes cast for a winning candidate above and beyond the minimum number needed to win. Whenever there are minor candidates on the ballot, the number of wasted votes is over 50 percent. With preference voting—the simplest and best implementation of PR that lets you select candidates in order of your preference—the number of wasted votes is a fraction of the electorate: just under 25 percent in a three-seat district, just under 7.7 percent in a 12-seat district. Which is why it would be better to elect all of North Carolina's representatives from one district, rather than from four 3-seat districts.

Third, preference voting means voting for the candidate you want, rather than against the one you hate most. It encourages positive campaigning, issue-oriented campaigning, and voting your conscience rather than tactical voting for the lesser of two evils. As a result, it also encourages political participation—systems with PR have much higher rates of voter turnout.

Finally, only PR can assure true majority rule. Richie says that winner take all allows 51 percent of votes to

## Voter turnout

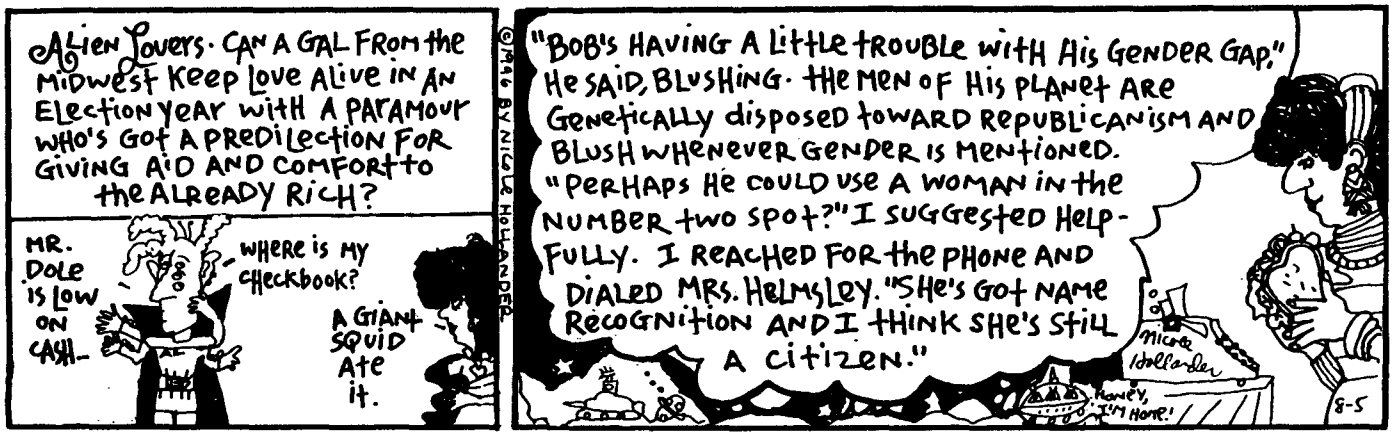
In the June 24 and July 8 issues of *In These Times*, the false assertion that only 38 percent of eligible voters participated in the last presidential election ricocheted from your letters section right into your lead editorial.

In fact, turnout in presidential elections has never fallen below 50 percent of eligible voters. Nationwide, 104,405,155 people voted in 1992, 55 percent of the 189 million people of voting age, according to the Federal Election Commission. Here in Illinois, 61 percent of people over 18 cast ballots.

None of this is reason for pride. American voting rates have fallen from nearly 70 percent to just over 50 percent in the last three decades, and even these figures mask the extent of the decline.

In the early '60s, turnout in most Northern states approached 80 percent

SYLVIA — by Nicole Hollander






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while fewer than a third of "eligible" voters in Southern states cast ballots because of poll taxes, grandfather clauses and violence. Since then, the Voting Rights Act has brought democracy, with participation rates above 50 percent, to the former Confederacy. At the same time, more than a quarter of the Northern electorate gave up on voting.

Under Cook County Clerk David Orr, my office has tried to increase participation by sponsoring creative voter-registration programs, but, as you point out, participation depends mostly on candidates who appeal to working people. The disconnection between elected officials and much of the electorate is alarming, even without drastically exaggerating it.

**Ryan Chew**
Director of Voter Registration
Cook County Clerk's Office
Chicago, Ill.

## Trumka maligned

As someone who worked as closely as anyone with Rich Trumka, I take strong exception to Laura McClure's charge that "internal staff dissent was stifled" at the United Mine Workers ("UMW's female trouble," June 10).

My experience with Trumka was that, as UMW president, he not only tolerated but actively encouraged debate among members of the union's staff. The upshot was that the UMW was able to craft the kind of winning strategies that enabled the union to succeed where other organizations might not have.

While McClure may not be aware of this quality to Trumka's leadership style, those of us who worked with him are.

Jim Grossfield
Washington, D.C.

## Guns and liberty

A comment on Chris Lehmann's review of Michael Tomasky's *Left for Dead* ("Dead again," June 10): I have not been able to examine Tomasky's book thoroughly, but I get the picture. The left, with its learned helplessness, has no political instincts or appeal to a broader community. Tomasky provides an insightful and valuable analysis, but his refusal to effectively address gun violence, which Lehmann correctly criticizes, is more grievous than Lehmann allows. Tomasky buys into the libertarian fantasy with his refusal to even think about proposing measures against gun violence. The shared political culture that Lehmann and Tomasky seek to build is based on the fundamental proposition that we live under the laws of this government—or some government. A viable political order is the first order of political business. The libertarian fantasy would have it otherwise.

The libertarian fantasy is the driving political ideology of our time from the Southern League to the gun lobby to the Republican Revolution. It is the perfect capitalist fantasy. In the economic sphere, we surrender to unfettered capitalism. The private sector will take care of everything. The gun lobby, however, with enormous respectability provided by libertarian pseudo-scholarship, would carry the fantasy to the political sphere as well. Private sovereignty will take care of everything. We dissolve political community, declare individuals sovereign, and return to the state of nature, which is a state of anarchy where we will all be freed from political obligation ... at least until the gun lobby's "armed citizen guerrillas" reorder our relationships. This childish fantasy says more about the personal psychology of the fantasizer than the fantasizer's capacity for thought. Marx at least required a historical process for the state to wither away.

The doctrine of personal sovereignty extends to the gun lobby's claim that a right to arms translates into a right to insurrection. Fallacious, blatantly dishonest arguments have filled law journals in recent years and are repeated in the news media and the political arena. But the right to insurrection is not an equal-opportunity claim. Labor militants in the '30s and student radicals and the civil rights movement in the '60s could not make the claim without serious consequences—never mind acting it out. Minister Farrakhan has not dared. There are simple solutions, but the left has missed this one, too. Tomasky and Lehmann both fail to see that the left could defeat the radical right here and establish its credibility simply by demanding a level playing field and holding the politicians to their oaths of office. But it seems that moderate Republicans will be the ones to take the subject up.

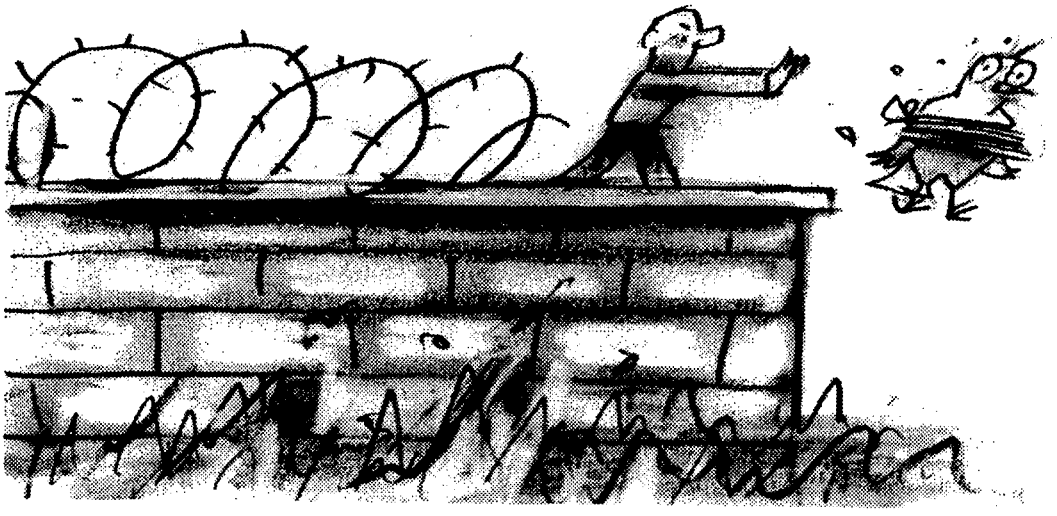
I have tried to expose the frauds for years. My articles can be found on the Internet in the *Firearms Policy Journal* (http://www.intr.net/phoenix/homepage.html).

**G. Eyclesheimer Ernst**
Hyattsville, Md.



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# InSHORT



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## Riding the Orange Tiger

The contrast could not have been greater. For a week in July, Nelson Mandela made a triumphal progress through Britain's streets and palaces, mobbed at every turn as a modern saint. At the same time, the streets of Northern Ireland were sliding back into a sectarian chaos of petrol bombs, plastic bullets, riot shields and burning cars.

Mandela shows how a combination of political courage and a willingness to forgive past atrocities can make peace in the most unpromising circumstances. In Northern Ireland, the lack of political leadership from all sides has turned the clock back 30 years.

As so often has happened in recent years, the trouble started with a march. Of the 3,500 marches that take place every year in Northern Ireland—90 percent of them conducted by Protestants—one of the most incendiary occurs outside the small town of Portadown on July 12, the anniversary of the Battle of the Boyne. This year, the (overwhelmingly Protestant) police of the Royal Ulster Constabulary (RUC) banned members of the Protestant fraternal organization called the Orange Order from marching their traditional route, which passes a Catholic housing estate on the Garvaghy Road. The police held out for four days as the crowd of Protestant Orangemen swelled and a wave of protests swept across Ireland.

The RUC finally caved in, the Orangemen marched triumphantly past outraged Catholics, and Ulster—and the peace process—went up in

## How to buy a senator




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ONE OF THE MOST POPULAR WAYS CORPORATIONS SKIRT FEDERAL LAWS limiting campaign contributions is to bundle individual contributions together and then donate that hefty wad of money to a chosen candidate. In the fourth edition of *Open Secrets: The Encyclopedia of Congressional Money and Politics*, soon to be released by the Center for Responsive Politics, authors Larry Makinson and Joshua Goldstein report that the most avid bundler is MBNA America Bank. MBNA issues lots of credit cards from its headquarters in the bank haven otherwise known as Delaware. In the 1994 election cycle, MBNA gave $868,000 to congressional candidates. More than half of this money went to five Republican members of Congress, including $128,670 to Sen. Alfonse D'Amato (R-NY), who wasn't even running for re-election in 1994. After the Republican takeover of the Senate, however, D'Amato became chair of the Senate Banking Committee—and beholden to MBNA. —**Joel Bleifuss**



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# APPALL-O-METER

THE *IN THESE TIMES* INDEX OF INDECENCIES

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

By David Futrelle

## Having nun of it 8.4

When Sister Doris Gormley of the Sisters of St. Francis of Philadelphia sent a mildly worded form letter to Cypress Semiconductor Corp. CEO T.J. Rodgers suggesting he seek more "diversity" in his board of directors, she didn't exactly expect the response she got. In a caustic diatribe, nearly 3,000 words long, the high-tech exec accused the nun of supporting an "immoral attempt by coercive utopians to mandate even more government control over America's economy."

Though you might think even the coldest corporate Scrooge would draw the line at attacking a grey-haired woman of the cloth, the *Wall Street Journal* reports that industry reviews of Rodgers' outburst have been enthusiastic. The letter, which has been circulating through an "underground network of disgruntled veterans of the affirmative-action debate," and which has been distributed to Cypress shareholders as well, has garnered high praise from many industry executives. One investor, inspired by Rodgers' missive, wrote Gormley to say that he was "glad you're a sister 'cause otherwise you would have henpecked some poor soul to death."

## Art attack 4.3

To protest the reopening of a street in downtown Seattle, self-proclaimed guerrilla artist Jason Sprinkle parked a beat-up pickup truck on a busy thoroughfare. In the truck bed was a large metal red heart, and the word "bomb" adorned the bumper. After puncturing the tires, Sprinkle fled. It didn't occur to him, evidently, that anyone might think his truck actually contained a bomb. In fact, Sprinkle says, he didn't think anyone would even notice. Someone did, and police evacuated a nine-block area of downtown Seattle for five hours. The artist, described by an Associated Press reporter as "exasperated," surrendered to police that evening. "They shouldn't think it was a bomb," the *Seattle Post-Intelligencer* reported him as saying. "They should know my personality."




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## All shook up 2.6

The First Annual International Conference on Elvis Presley, held last year at the University of Mississippi in Tupelo, garnered perhaps more than its share of media attention. The conference was pointed to as an example of all that is wrong with contemporary academic cultural studies. Now, the *Boston Globe* reports, the second annual conference is getting some stiff local opposition. The Presley estate at Graceland and the Tupelo Convention and Visitors Bureau have refused to renew funding for the confab this year—apparently offended by the inclusion in the program of Elvis Herselvis, an "atomic-powered lesbian" facsimile of the King, and of Elvis Presley Jr., who claims to be an illegitimate son of the real King.

flames. Four nights of rioting began; the main Catholic political party, the Social Democratic and Labor Party (SDLP), withdrew from the Northern Ireland peace talks; the next day, the first bomb to explode in Ulster in two years put 40 people in the hospital. John Major and Irish Prime Minister John Bruton descended into a public slanging match over the RUC's decision, while Sinn Fein leader Gerry Adams declared that the peace process was "in absolute ruins."

Observers handed out blame to most of the political leaders involved. Some faulted Adams for failing to deliver a lasting IRA ceasefire; others lambasted Major for his lack of foresight in leaving the decision on Portadown to a hard-pressed RUC. Still others, believing that high-level British officials were involved in the decision, derided the British government for caving in to Protestant pressure—Major is effectively reliant on the Protestant Unionist MPs to maintain the Conservatives' slim parliamentary majority.

But the chief villain in the affair was David Trimble, Ulster's answer to Slobodan Milosevic. Like the Serb leader, Trimble rose to prominence by playing on the worst instincts of his supporters, with bloody consequences for his country. At Portadown last year, when more far-sighted Unionist politicians stayed away, Trimble led the Orangemen in another triumphant confrontation with the police. Within months, he claimed as his reward the leadership of the Ulster Unionist Party, the largest Northern Ireland party at Westminster. A year later, he had no choice but to return to Portadown, to ride the Orange tiger once more or risk being outflanked by some even more reactionary politician, such as the Rev. Ian Paisley, leader of the rival Democratic Unionist Party. Whatever Trimble's broader political motives, by putting his political career first and going to Portadown, he legitimized the most recalcitrant forces within unionism, and helped push the peace process over the cliff. His involvement massively upped the stakes at Portadown.

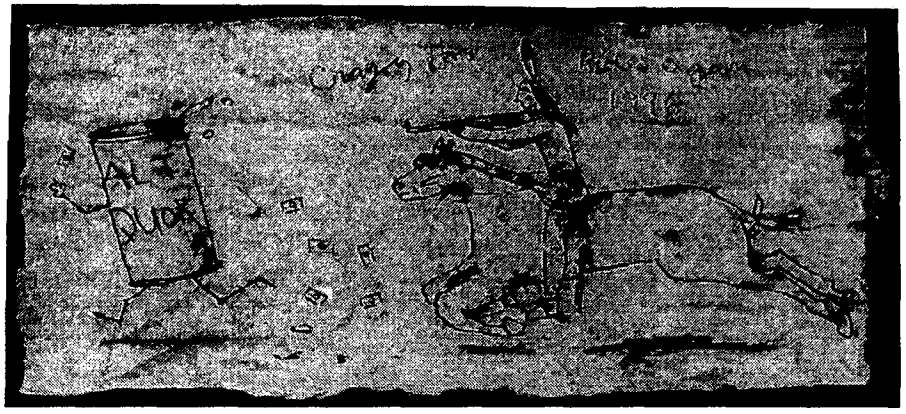
In the days after Trimble's "victory," Unionist die-hards boasted that they had reversed what they see as a decade of concessions by the Tories to the Irish government and Sinn Fein. The Protestants are once again back in the driver's seat, and the peace process they always feared would hand over sovereignty to Dublin lies in tatters.

But where can they go from here? As John Major's government slides towards electoral oblivion and men like David Trimble fan the sectarian flames, Ulster desperately needs—and lacks—a leader of Mandela's stature, one who can provide a vision of a future that can overcome the mutual hatred of the past. Most people, both Protestants and Catholics, undoubtedly prefer peace to war, but the failure of their leaders to turn that longing into a political reality leaves few people optimistic about the future.

—Duncan Green



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# CRAZY HORSE RIDES AGAIN

Seth Big Crow, a third-generation descendant of Lakota leader Crazy Horse, is waging war in the courts over the use of his ancestor's name in The Original Crazy Horse Malt Liquor. "They have stolen his name from us and slapped it on a bottle of beer," Big Crow says.

The G. Heileman Brewing Company of Lacrosse, Wis., brews the beer under contract with the Hornell Brewing Company and Ferolito, Vultaggio & Sons. The beer companies, which also make Arizona Iced Tea, have earned some $60 million after taxes from the sale of their beverages packaged in Indian designs.

Native Americans find the use of the "Crazy Horse" name for a beer product particularly offensive because Crazy Horse died trying to protect his people from the ravages—including alcoholism—brought by the U.S. Army and white settlers. Furthermore, say Native Americans, the use of the name contributes to the pernicious stereotype of the drunken Indian.

The brewers originally marketed the fortified beer—with an alcohol content of 5.9 percent, twice that of normal beer—as Powermaster malt liquor. This label, targeted at young black men, was removed in 1991 because of public protest from the African-American community and a ruling by the Federal Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco and Firearms. In 1992, the companies put the same beer back on the market with the new label.

After the brewers refused to honor requests to voluntarily withdraw the label, Native Americans turned to Congress for redress. In 1992, President Bush signed a law banning the national sale of an alcohol product bearing the Crazy Horse label. The beer makers, citing infringement against their commercial free-speech rights, successfully challenged the law in a New York federal court in 1993.

The beer is currently banned in Minnesota and Washington State. A Minnesota court revoked the company's brand-name registration two years ago in accordance with a 1994 state law that authorizes such action "if a brand label states or implies in a false or misleading manner a connection with an actual living or dead American Indian leader."

In December 1995, the Minnesota Civil Liberties Union (MCLU) launched an appeal of the ruling. "The state shouldn't be involved in protecting Crazy Horse," says Michael Moore, head of the MCLU, "It may be politically correct, and it may be Minnesota nice, but it violates free speech."

Robert Gough, Big Crow's lawyer, contests that it is a property, not a speech case. The brewers have no right to use the name, Gough argues, since they never requested permission.

Meanwhile, in June, the Rosebud Sioux Supreme Court gave Crazy Horse's descendants the go-ahead to proceed with a civil trial over the right to use the Crazy Horse name. The descendents are seeking damages and a legal precedent affirming the family's right to the name. The decision overturned a 1994 lower tribal court ruling that dismissed the lawsuit on the grounds that the court lacked jurisdiction since the brewers had deliberately avoided selling the beer on South Dakota's Rosebud Reservation. The Rosebud Supreme Court ruled that the brewing companies' decision not to sell the beer on the reservation appeared to be a "cynical ploy" to escape the arm of tribal law.

Big Crow and his supporters have called for a nationwide boycott of the brewers' products, including Arizona Iced Tea. "No other ethnic group suffers more humiliation from use of status and symbols without permission," says Big Crow. "It's open season on our culture." —*Anne M. Dunn*

# Powell agonistes

BOB DOLE'S DREAM OF HAVING COLIN POWELL AS HIS RUNNING MATE MAY BE dead, but America's infatuation with the retired four-star general shows no signs of fading. That love affair might founder, however, if more Americans began reading *The Consortium*, the biweekly newsletter published by investigative reporter Robert Parry. In the July 22 issue, Parry and journalist Norman Solomon dredged up then-Maj. Powell's little-known role in covering up American atrocities during the Vietnam War. In 1968, Powell was assigned to investigate charges that soldiers in the U.S. Army's Americal unit routinely brutalized Vietnamese civilians. "Far beyond merely dismissing the Vietnamese as 'slopes' or 'gooks,' " Americal soldier Tom Glen complained in a letter to his superiors, "too many American soldiers seem to discount their very humanity." Without interviewing Glen, Powell dismissed the allegations, insisting that "relations between Americal soldiers and the Vietnamese people are excellent." By 1969, the world would learn, contrary to Powell's line, that Americal troops had slaughtered 347 men, women and children at My Lai on May 16, 1968. —J.B.



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# MEDIA WATCH

BY THOMAS GOETZ

## Emerging mergers

Watching the stock market whipsaw between bulls and bears this month, it's tempting to reminisce about last summer, when the flurry of media mergers drove stocks into the ether. John Malone, Mike Eisner, Larry Tisch—ah, the memories. How refreshing it was this July 17, when Ted Turner and Time Warner's Gerald Levin, reminding us of those fine old days, announced that the Federal Trade Commission had agreed to let the merger of their companies go through. The biggest communications conglomerate in the world—Time Warner/Turner—was born anew.

How to make sense of the resuscitated merger was largely a question of which news program you were watching. On MSNBC—the suckling spawn of NBC's dalliance with Microsoft, and CNN's direct competitor—anchorman Brian Williams delivered the story with something between bemusement and scorn, as if suddenly realizing he was reading a personal insult coming across his TelePrompTer. Thirty channels up, the hosts of E! Entertainment Television treated the story with the same saccharine spunk they devote to all entertainment news—so it hardly matters that they neglected to mention that Time Warner signs their paychecks as well.

But watching CNN was most telling of all. You could catch the faint, triumphal smirk on the reporter's face as she reported the merger and then made her obligatory disclosure that Turner, in fact, "owns this network." "The agreement is still subject to some conditions," she added sportingly, if less than helpfully, "and remains contested by some consumer groups."

With that dismissive nod, CNN cast aside the objections of dozens of consumer advocates, educators and media professionals, who argue that the merger consolidates too much power in the hands of one company.

## Ripoff.com

While the fight against Time Warner/Turner might be all but over, there are still battles to be fought with despots like Rupert Murdoch.

Farhan Memon, a 25-year-old former business reporter for the *New York Post* has registered the World Wide Web address "www.nypost.com" and is demanding compensation from the *Post* to give it up. The *Post* has responded with a lawsuit claiming trademark infringement. While the newspaper may take some heart from a recent U.S. appeals court decision recognizing copyright on the Internet, the trademark strategy hasn't worked so well in practice: Both McDonalds and MTV have settled out of court in their own domain-name battles. In 1994, *Wired* magazine writer Josh Quittner registered the address "mcdonalds.com." The beef bistro had to donate $3,500 of computer equipment to a Brooklyn school before they could get the address. Former MTV veejay Adam Curry snagged "mtv.com" before he handed it back to MTV in an undisclosed settlement.

Sad to say, Memon doesn't make the best poster boy for those fighting against the Murdochian future. As the *New York Observer* reported last year, Columbia University's journalism school expelled him in December 1994 for plagiarism. Memon claimed to have interviewed theater impresario Joseph Papp for a story, unaware that Papp had died three years before. But nowadays, Memon's about the closest thing to a fighting chance we've got.

TOMORROW'S NEWS TONIGHT — By Steve Brodner




*Perot loses Reform nomination; his elderly supporters listen to Lamm.*



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# DEMOCRATS REFUSE FUSION OVERTURE

Minnesota Democrats have quashed ballot "fusion," an electoral strategy designed to build progressive coalitions and increase voter participation. On July 16, leaders of the Democratic Farmer-Labor Party (DFL) blocked Progressive Minnesota, an affiliate of the New Party, in its attempt to cross-nominate three Democratic candidates for the state legislature.

Fusion is an electoral strategy that allows two or more political parties to nominate the same candidate for the same office. It creates an opportunity to bring new voters into the democratic process by reaching out to those who consider themselves to be independents or who have dropped out from electoral activity with either of the two major parties. Recent polls show that a majority of Minnesota voters think neither of the two major parties represents the interests of ordinary citizens.

The Minnesota state legislature rescinded a century-old ban on fusion this spring after a federal appeals court ruled in January that the ban violated the New Party's First Amendment rights of political association. Reacting to the court decision, Minnesota legislators wrote a highly restrictive law, which simply adds the minor nominating party's name to the original party line. Without a separate ballot line, it is impossible to tell how much support a minor party brings to a candidate, and fusion loses much of its impact.

Despite these obstacles, Progressive Minnesota voted to cross-nominate Twin Cities area legislators Sandra Pappas, Andy Dawkins and Karen Clark. Rep. Dawkins' original challenge to the fusion ban in 1994 led to this year's court ruling. Each of these incumbent DFL legislators actively sought the Progressive Minnesota nomination, and campaign workers gathered thousands of petition signatures in a two-week period to place them on the ballot. To make the fusion candidacies official, Progressive Minnesota needed only to get the consent of DFL state chair Mark Andrew. But state DFL leaders, holding a narrow majority in the legislature, are nervous about creating space for progressive alternatives. Despite earlier assurances of cooperation, Andrew decided at the last moment not to let Progressive Minnesota cross-nominate the DFL candidates.

Meanwhile, incumbent U.S. Senator Paul Wellstone, up for re-election this year, declined the nomination of Progressive Minnesota, whose members collected over 20,000 signatures to place him on the ballot. Wellstone expressed concern about "voter confusion" with more than one party label next to a candidate's name. Some observers speculate that Wellstone's campaign staff, gearing up for a tough rematch against Republican Rudy Boschwitz, is trying to refashion the progressive senator as a Clinton-style "New Democrat."

Despite these setbacks, fusion is far from dead. In May, the U.S. Supreme Court agreed to hear the case on appeal from the state of Minnesota. By 1997, fusion may be legal throughout the United States. But as the Minnesota case shows, legal breakthroughs are not enough when commitment to the two-party system overrides an opportunity to engage new constituencies.

—Joe Peschek

# Estrogen mimickers and the EPA

IN JUNE, THE HOUSE JOINED THE SENATE IN REAUTHORIZING THE SAFE DRINKing Water Act, which, among other things, requires for the first time that environmental regulators monitor drinking water for the presence of chemicals that mimic the female hormone estrogen. That action follows, though is not related to, the May 30 release of a statement by an international group of scientists and physicians who met last November in Erice, Italy, to discuss the harm hormone-mimicking chemicals can do to the human brain and central nervous system. Known as the Erice Statement, it was published in two recent issues of *Rachel's Environment & Health Weekly*, and reads in part: "The benefits of reduced health-care costs could be substantial if exposure to endrocrine-disrupting chemicals were reduced. A trivial amount of government resources is devoted to monitoring environmental chemicals and health effects. The public is unaware of this and believes that they are adequately protected. The message that endocrine disruptors are present in the environment and have the potential to affect many people over a lifespan has not effectively reached the general public, the scientific community, regulators or policy makers." —J.B.

# CROATIA'S POPULATION CAMPAIGN

Multicolored maps of Croatia and posters of wet, wide-eyed babies checker the walls and windows of the Zagreb office of the Croatian Population Movement (CPM). "Have one more child," reads one poster with a smiling pre-schooler in army fatigues flashing the two-finger victory sign.

"These black fields show where deaths outnumber births by 2-to-1," explains Suzanna, a CPM volunteer, pointing to one of the detailed demographic maps. "It's very dangerous for Croatia," says the 21-year-old student, "because if we don't have young peo-



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ple, we don't have Croatia. We would stop existing as a people."

The CPM, a small, well-funded group with close ties to the government, is run by Don Ante Bakovic, a Catholic fundamentalist and outspoken conservative. Alongside Bakovic's organization, the Catholic Church, Croatia's ruling national party, the HDZ, and a growing pro-life movement are stepping up a campaign to promote bigger families in Croatia.

Abortion is still legal in Croatia, but the Catholic Church and like-minded groups are lobbying to have it banned. In addition to moral concerns, nationalists argue that abortion depletes the Croatian nation. "Gynecologists in Croatia have killed five to six times more little Croats than the Chetniks (Serbian soldiers) during the war," claims Bakovic in his monthly publication, *Narod* (Nation).

But critics of the pro-family movement and a related state-backed demographic program say the campaigns are overtly nationalistic and anti-woman, aimed primarily at repopulating Croatia—and Croatian-dominated parts of Bosnia—with ethnic Croatians.

Earlier this year, the Croatian parliament passed the Program for Demographic Renewal, a manifesto calling for measures to increase the national birth rate, stem emigration and "redistribute" the population. The latter goal refers to resettling war-ravaged parts of the country. In strident, nationalist language, the 50-page declaration demands the "protection of the family as the basic unit of society." "The Croatian nation could be threatened with extinction if determined steps are not taken," claims Croatian President Franjo Tudjman in the document.

The program proposes economic initiatives and media campaigns to encourage women to have three or more children. But Croatian women's groups say the financially strapped state is unable to provide mothers with the minimal benefits already promised them.

"Women are promised these incentives if they stay home," says Kristine Jenkins of the Women's Information and Documentation Center in Zagreb. "But it's a red herring, because they don't exist," she says. "Women will leave or be pushed out of their jobs for nothing."

Critics of the demographic program claim its real goal is to rectify population imbalance created by the wars in Croatia and Bosnia.

"There's a clear political, even military-strategic agenda behind these demographic policies," says philosopher Zarko Puhovski, a prominent human-rights advocate. "Their goal is to create more Croats and less minorities in the area nationalists see as Croatia, which includes western Bosnia and Herzegovina." In the demographic program, these areas are referred to as "regions of strategic importance" for the Croatian state.

It's difficult to gauge public enthusiasm for the campaign. The state-controlled media has pushed the program gingerly. "One More Child" propaganda appears on telephone cards and a few billboards. After nearly five years of war and economic hardship, most Croatians seem to have little interest in an ideological campaign backed by an ever less popular government.

"Croats will start having babies when the economy picks up," says Jasna, a 26-year-old school teacher. "And for that we need new elections."

—Paul Hockenos

Sources

Duncan Green is a writer for the Latin America Bureau, a London-based research organization.

Anne M. Dunn writes for *Native American Press* based in Bemidji, Minnesota.

Joe Peschek is a political science professor at Hamline University in St. Paul and a member of Progressive Minnesota's Steering Committee. To contact the New Party, call 1-800-200-1294.

Paul Hockenos is the Eastern European correspondent for *In These Times*.

THE ADVENTURES OF A HUGE MOUTH By Peter Hannan






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THE FIRST STONE

# THE GREAT DOLPHIN DIVIDE

**By Joel Bleifuss**

How can environmentalists in the United States best ensure that the dolphins of the earth's oceans live long and healthy lives? That is the key question in a complex and acrimonious debate that for the past year has divided the U.S. environmental community.

Everyone involved wants to save the dolphins. They disagree, however, about which of two Senate bills currently under consideration will achieve that end.

Until environmentalists and lawmakers took action in 1990, the international tuna fishing boats plying the Eastern Tropical Pacific—the ocean waters that lie between Latin America and American Samoa—were slaughtering tens of thousands of eastern spinner dolphins and northeastern spotted dolphins every year. In those particular seas, dolphins and tuna swim together. The captains of the large tuna boats—250-foot-long vessels that cost roughly $12 million—know that if they set their nets for dolphins, they can catch the tuna that swim beneath. Once dolphins are sighted, the tuna boat captains chase down and tire out the dolphins before herding them, and the tuna, into waiting "purse-seine" nets. Since the purse-seine method of fishing was first introduced to the Eastern Tropical Pacific in the 1950s, the populations of eastern spinner dolphins and northeastern spotted dolphins have fallen an estimated 44 percent and 23 percent, respectively. Throughout the '80s, more than 100,000 dolphins were killed each year in the process.

In the late 1980s, the Earth Island Institute, a San Francisco-based environmental group, took the lead in protesting this destructive fishing practice. Public outcry over the dolphin killings eventually led Congress in 1990 to pass the Dolphin Protection and Consumer Information Act, the legislation that created the "dolphin-safe" tuna label. That label certifies that fishermen did not catch the tuna by chasing dolphins into purse-seine nets in the Eastern Tropical Pacific. The U.S. tuna fleet has responded to the law by fishing outside of the Eastern Tropical Pacific. Latin American tuna boats have stayed put, but altered their purse-seine methods so that the net is drawn closed underwater, allowing most of the surface-swimming dolphins to swim clear of it. As a result of the U.S. law and subsequent implementation of less destructive fishing practices, the number of dolphins killed in purse-seine nets has fallen to fewer than 5,000 a year. Yet because the Latin American tuna boats still use purse-seine nets to catch tuna, that tuna cannot be labeled dolphin-safe, and is consequently shut out of the U.S. markets.

In 1991, Mexico protested to a GATT tribunal that the Dolphin Protection Act was an unfair trade practice that discriminated against the Mexican tuna fleet. The tribunal ruled in Mexico's favor. The Bush administration, however, used its prerogative to veto any GATT ruling that contradicted U.S. domestic regulations.

With the passage of NAFTA in 1994, the U.S. government had less flexibility. In the aftermath of Mexico's protest, trade negotiators from the U.S. and Latin American tuna-fishing nations, with input from environmental organizations, have been trying to reach an understanding on the issue before it went to a NAFTA tribunal. A series of meetings held in Panama in the summer of 1995 produced a multilateral binding agreement known as the "Panama Declaration." The declaration will put an observer from the Inter-American Tropical Tuna Commission (IATTC), an industry group, on every tuna boat in the Eastern Tropical Pacific, regardless of its nationality or fishing method. These observers will monitor the boat's impact on the ecosystem. The agreement sets progressively declining caps on the number of dolphins that may be killed—eventually reducing the number of permissible deaths to zero.

Proposed U.S. legislation changes the definition of "dolphin-safe" to conform to the international standards hammered out in Panama. The legislation, backed by the Clinton administration and five U.S. environmental groups, is sponsored by Sens. Ted Stevens (R-AK) and John Breaux (D-LA). This bill, S1420, would allow tuna caught using the safer purse-seine nets to be imported into the United States and sold with a dolphin-safe label, as long as the IATTC observers on each boat do not witness any dolphin deaths.

An alternative dolphin bill is being sponsored by Sens. Barbara Boxer (D-CA) and Joseph Biden (D-DE), who were the backers of the original 1990 Dolphin Protection and Consumer Information Act. The new bill, S1460, supported by Earth Island Institute, the Sierra Club and Public Citizen, would change current law to reward any company whose boats do not set purse-seine nets on dolphins in the Eastern Tropical Pacific. The bill does not make distinctions between different purse-seine fishing methods, and thus still prohibits the chasing of dolphins to catch tuna.

Feelings on the issue run high.

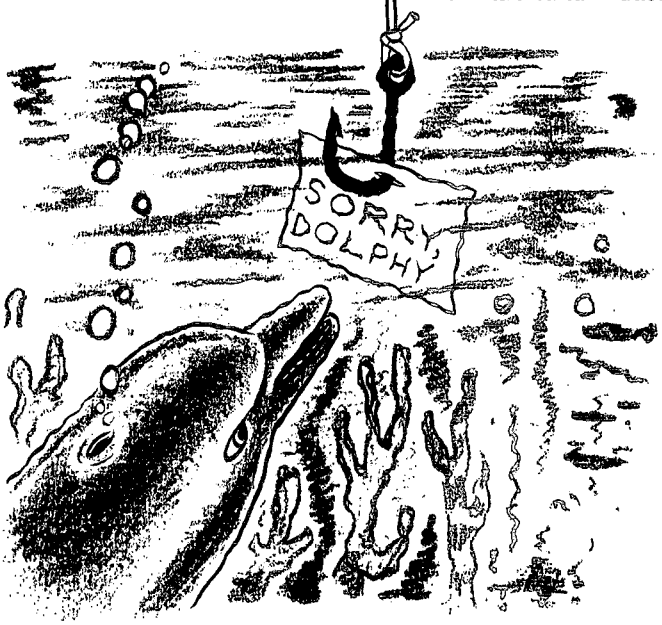


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Greenpeace, working with the Clinton administration, takes an "internationalist" position and supports the Panama Declaration and the Stevens-Breaux bill as a step in the right direction. For Greenpeace, a strategy that considers the health of the whole ecosystem and the interests of all nations' tuna fleets in the Eastern Tropical Pacific is more effective at saving dolphins than a unilateral strategy that concentrates only on dolphins.

"We live in a shrinking global village," says Cliff Curtis, a political adviser for Greenpeace International. "We need, where possible, to work with other countries to protect the oceans. The Panama Declaration provides a way forward to protect more dolphins in the future as well as other species—like sharks, bullfish and juvenile tuna—that are being overfished in some of the near shore areas and are now at risk."

Gerry Leape, Greenpeace's legislative director for ocean issues, puts it this way: "Many environmental crises know no borders, and the unnecessary killing of marine mammals is one such crisis. One country acting alone cannot save the oceans and protect their bounty."




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The strategy favored by Greenpeace has bitter critics. Earth Island Institute has labeled the Stevens-Breaux legislation the "Dolphin Death Bill." Public Citizen decries it as the "Marine Mammal Kill Bill," one that sacrifices both dolphins and U.S. sovereignty at the altar of free trade. Public Citizen's Lori Wallach, in an open letter to U.S. senators, wrote, "Your actions with [the dolphin-safe legislation] will set the precedent for future GATT/World Trade Organization rulings that declare we can no longer maintain our democratically achieved U.S. laws."

Nathan LaBudde, whose videotaped images of wholesale dolphin slaughter on tuna boats helped galvanize public opinion in defense of dolphins, writes in *Earth Island Journal* that "one of the most damaging aspects" of the Stevens-Breaux bill is that enforcement of its provisions would be the responsibility of the IATTC, which LaBudde says has a dismal record of regulating itself. Since it was founded in 1949, no IATTC member nation has ever fined one of its ships for violating IATTC agreements.

Some marine-mammal experts who oppose the bill disagree with government claims that dolphins are not harmed by the new "safer" purse-seine nets permitted under the Clinton Administration's new definition of "dolphin-safe." These critics maintain that dolphin social structure is disrupted by the intense hunts. The chases, conducted by three to six speedboats and often a helicopter, occur at sustained high speeds and last for 20 to 40 minutes. In the process, baby and elderly dolphins are undoubtedly left behind to die, their deaths not witnessed by IATTC observers.

Roger Payne is president of the Whale Conservation Institute of Lincoln, Mass., and was a member in 1990 of of the National Academy of Sciences Committee on Reducing Porpoise Mortality from Tuna Fishing. In a letter to Congress, Payne wrote, "I feel strongly that any legislation which fosters or legitimizes the practice of setting nets on dolphins is wrong. ... It has been conservatively estimated that some dolphin groups spend as many as four hours per day fleeing boats from the tuna industry." Payne goes on to point out that despite the drastic decline in observed dolphin deaths in the past five years, "recent research suggests that the primary target dolphin populations have not shown any signs of recovering and that target populations of at least two species appear to be declining."

The two sides in the debate remain divided. "We spent a lot of time trying to raise public awareness of marine mammals. This is a step backwards," says one marine ecologist critical of the Stevens-Breaux bill, who asked not to be named because he works for an environmental group that supports the bill. "I worry that we have wasted years and years of public-awareness-raising to get the dolphin-safe label. Now we are saying that what was not all right five years ago is now okay."

The Clinton administration, and those environmental organizations which support it, feel that it is time to change strategy. "The dolphin-safe label has served its purpose," says Leape at Greenpeace. "It has done as much as it can do. One of its original goals was to stop the setting of purse-seine nets on dolphins, but outside of the U.S. fleet it has had no impact. We feel a much more effective mechanism for achieving greater protection for dolphins is an international program that is binding on all countries."

Which strategy will save the most dolphins? It's a tough call. The Senate will choose a side when it votes in September. ◀

*For more information on the issue, contact: Earth Island Institute, 300 Broadway, Suite 28, San Francisco, CA 94133, (415) 788-7324; and Greenpeace, 1436 U Street N.W., Washington, DC 20009, (202) 462-2359.*



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RELIGION

# Righteous brothers

***Are the Promise Keepers renewing family values or advancing the agenda of the Christian right?***

By Frederick Clarkson

For two hot days in June, nearly 40,000 men gathered inside the Carrier Dome in Syracuse, N.Y., to study the Bible, listen to nationally known preachers, hold hands, sing songs, roar approval at the right moments, and stand in line for expensive hot dogs and super-size Cokes. Preachers clad in matching blue and purple polo shirts exhorted them to become better husbands and fathers, to abandon the sin of racism, and to obey God's Word. They prayed. They repented. They batted beach balls around. Then they went back to their communities, many to join personal-accountability cell groups to carry the message forward. These men call themselves the Promise Keepers.

The Denver-based organization was established five years ago with an inaugural gathering of 72 men in Boulder, Colo., convened by former University of Colorado football coach Bill McCartney. Today, the organization fills sports arenas with as many as 72,000 men. A staff of 400 spent $60 million last year to draw over 700,000 men to a dozen stadium rallies. Attendance is growing at a spectacular pace. By the time this year's 22 stadium events culminate with rallies in New York City, Memphis, Tenn., Jacksonville, Fla., and Dallas in the fall, total attendance will approach a million.

The participants at the Syracuse rally were overwhelmingly white and appeared solidly middle class. Most were in their 30s and 40s, although there was no shortage of younger men. Tickets cost $60—prohibitively expensive for most lower-income men—though some churches bought discounted blocks of tickets and came to the stadium in buses from as far away as Canada. Many men came with their sons.

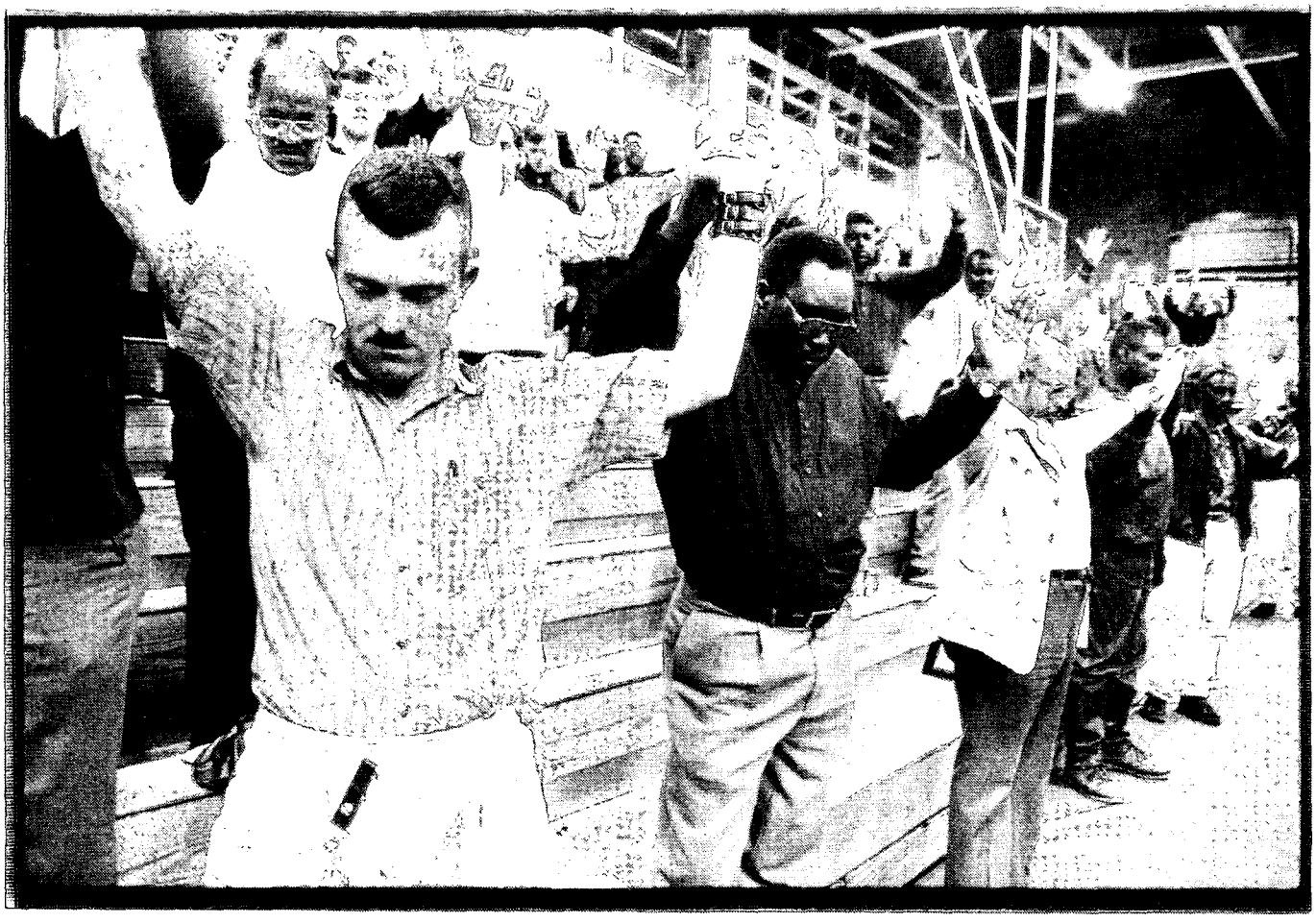
Promise Keeper events—the slickest religious consumer product since televangelism—are smartly packaged and mediagenic. The rallies have elements in common with arena sports, tent revivals, rock concerts and political rallies. They are well-paced, interspersing chants and speeches with blues, jazz, gospel, evangelical songs and traditional hymns. The mainstream media tend to cover the Promise Keeper rallies as they would a sporting event—which is like explaining the Catholic Church by reporting on a Papal Blessing for the tourists in St. Peter's Square.

The rallies are homey, fun and designed to create a comfortable place for men to bond and reflect upon what it means to be a "Christian man." An ambitious political and religious agenda, however, lurks behind the pep-rally atmosphere. The Promise Keepers are a Pentecostal revival movement that uses culture to attract new political recruits to the Christian right. The organizers have updated the venue from tents to sports arenas for what they hope will be the greatest mobilization of evangelicals in history—nothing less than a 20th century-scale Great Awakening.

The founding text of the group, *Seven Promises of a Promise Keeper*, is published by Focus on the Family, a large and influential Christian right organization headed by Promise Keeper director James Dobson. The book is a compilation of essays on each of the seven "promises"—akin to a Boy Scout oath for evangelicals. A Promise Keeper commits to: 1) "honoring Jesus" and obeying God's Word; 2) "pursuing vital relationships with a few other men to help him keep his promises"; 3) "practicing spiritual, moral, ethical and sexual purity"; 4) "building strong marriages and families"; 5) "supporting the mission of his church and praying for his pastor"; 6) "reaching beyond



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**A Promise Keeper rally in Fort Bragg, N.C.**

any racial and denominational barriers to demonstrate the power of biblical unity"; 7) obeying "the Great Commandment" (Jesus' direction to love God and love thy neighbor as thyself), and "the Great Commission" (to evangelize and Christianize the world). It is unclear how many of the men who attend the events actually commit themselves to these promises. However, most attendees are already evangelicals and the vast majority—88 percent, according to one survey—are married. Only 21 percent have been divorced, well below the national average.

The organization's gender politics may partly be a response to the erosion of male economic authority in contemporary households. Promise Keeper leader Rev. Tony Evans, in a much-quoted passage from *The Seven Promises of a Promise Keeper*, underscores the authoritarian nature of "Reclaiming Your Manhood":

> I can hear you saying, "I want to be a spiritually pure man. Where do I start?" The first thing you do is sit down with your wife and say something like this: "Honey, I've made a terrible mistake. I've given you my role. I gave up leading this family, and I forced you to take my place. Now I must reclaim that role." Don't misunderstand what I'm saying here. I'm not suggesting that you *ask* for your role back, I'm urging you to *take* it back (emphases in the original).

In Syracuse, Promise Keeper leader Bill Bright, head of the Campus Crusade for Christ, said wives should be treated with love and respect and included in decision-making, but the man is "the head of the household and women are responders."

This year, the Promise Keeper theme is "Break Down the Walls." The crowd in Syracuse sang a bouncy anthem, "Let the Walls Fall Down," several times over the two days—once via satellite hook-up with a Promise Keeper gathering of 10,000 in Boise, Idaho. The theme is related to Promise No. 6, to reach beyond "racial and denominational barriers."

McCartney and others speak and write movingly of "repenting the sin of racism." Their approach to "racial reconciliation," however, offers individual moral improvement and fundamentalist faith as the answer. In its discourse about racial injustice past and present, the organization turns a blind eye to the major causes and perpetrators of



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racial inequality.

A song lyric spoke of different people becoming "one holy race." This notion, consistent with the Christian Nationalist goals of the religious right, also epitomizes the Promise Keeper view of racism: Actual or latent attitudes of racial supremacy will wither away as people acknowledge their common membership in a "holy race" of fundamentalist Christians.

At the Syracuse rally, Rev. Tom Claus, a Mohawk evangelist, introduced the theme of racial unity. Wearing a full-feathered headdress, Claus declared that despite the history of broken treaties and genocide against native peoples he does not hate the white man because the white man brought him to Jesus—and he would "rather have Jesus than all the land in the U.S." This was met with wild cheering.

Half of the speakers on the stage in Syracuse were racial minorities—a reflection of the work of a Promise Keeper minority-outreach division started last year. In the stands, however, their efforts have been less successful. The Promise Keepers have claimed minority attendance figures as high as 25 percent at some rallies, but these numbers must be taken with a grain of salt. In Oakland this year, the organization claimed a 16 percent minority turnout; however, a writer for *Christian Century* magazine estimated that only one out of every 30 attendees was a man of color. In Syracuse, maybe one face in a hundred was not white.

For the Promise Keepers, denominational boundaries are as much an obstacle to Christian unity as racism. The organization's modus operandi undermines traditional denominational structures and doctrines from the inside, and thus has generated considerable controversy within the church community. Stadium veterans are encouraged to start Promise Keeper cells in their churches when they return home. They are also encouraged to attend Promise Keeper leadership training sessions and take special Promise Keeper courses at conservative seminaries in Denver and Orlando. Many believe the group has developed a parallel hierarchy that undercuts the authority of traditional churches. The cell group leaders, or "Key Men," report to area "Ambassadors," who in turn report directly to Denver. John Swomley, a professor emeritus at the St. Paul School of Theology in Kansas City, argues that the Promise Keepers "are particularly dangerous because of the divisions they seek to create within mainline churches" that do not accept the fundamentalist Promise Keeper theology and politics.

Despite the organization's frequent claims that it is apolitical, the hot-button issues of the Christian right regularly crop up at Promise Keeper events. For example, Rev. James Ryle, in his Syracuse sermon, blamed the glorification of "the self" over Christ for murder, drug addiction and "the gay movement." McCartney directed one Promise Keeper rally to "take the nation for Jesus Christ." At another, he said battles would be waged: "Wherever truth is at risk, in the schools or legislature, we are going to contend for it. We will win."

The organization's top leaders are involved in explicitly political causes. McCartney has addressed gatherings of the militant anti-abortion group Operation Rescue and campaigned for Colorado's Amendment 2, which sought to bar local civil rights ordinances protecting gays and lesbians.

Promise Keeper leader Bill Bright's speech at the Syracuse event was not political, but less than a football field away in the sales tents, organizers were selling his new book, *The Coming Revival: America's Call To Fast, Pray and Seek God's Face.* In it, Bright denounces the teaching of evolution instead of the "biblical view of creation" in the schools; Supreme Court decisions which he believes too "sharply defined the separation of church and state"; the banning of state-sponsored prayer in the schools; legalized abortion; and "the homosexual explosion."

Ryle, who is Bill McCartney's personal pastor and a Promise Keeper director, has an even more dramatic vision of the group's political calling. Ryle explained to journalist Russ Bellant that he believes the organization is the fulfillment of an army that the Bible prophesied would appear

## The stadium shopping network

**Whatever else they may be, the Promise Keepers are a successful business. In Syracuse, the business community was thrilled that the city was hosting a rally. Every hotel and motel room in the area had been booked months ahead of time. The Syracuse newspaper put out a special conference edition of the paper headlined: "WELCOME PROMISE KEEPERS!" Similarly, a sign along Lake Shore Drive in Chicago on the weekend of a stadium rally there flashed: "Promise Keepers/Business Opportunities."**

**Besides providing cash windfalls for host communities, the Promise Keepers are a sophisticated non-profit business, generating much of their income from ticket sales and the merchandising of Promise Keeper products (as well as the offering taken up at each stadium rally). But with the sexual and financial scandals of Pentecostal televangelists such as Jim and Tammy Bakker and Jimmy Swaggart still fresh in people's minds, the Promise Keepers sell an image of "purity." One Promise Keeper backer observed that all it would take would be "one sex or financial scandal and they will crash and burn." While this may be overstating the case, the Promise Keeper playbook does seem to owe more to the soft sell of upscale companies like Land's End than to Swaggart.**

**Promise Keepers not only have their own sales catalog and Web site, but also sell their products through Christian bookstores. Next to the Carrier Dome, on the grounds of Syracuse University, the organization set up three big tents. Its products and services are modeled on, and in many respects are an extension of, the Christian right**



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toward the end of the world to destroy sinners and unbelievers. "Never have 300,000 men come together throughout human history," he said, "except for the purposes of war."

The organization is planning a multi-racial, fundamentalist "million-man march" of its own on Washington, D.C. in the fall of 1997. In this march, the Promise Keepers hope to claim the mantle of moral authority of the civil rights movement and to erase the image of white fundamentalists as hypocritical and bigoted.

Meanwhile, the Promise Keepers continue to receive front-page accolades for their message of individual responsibility and Christian brotherhood. But for an organization that bills itself as building "men of integrity," it offers a great deal of opportunistic double-talk. Love your wife (but demand submission). Seek racial unity (but only among the biblically correct). Serve your pastor (but undermine his denomination). March on Washington, D.C. (but claim it's not political). ◀

**Frederick Clarkson** is the author of *Eternal Hostility: The Struggle Between Theocracy and Democracy*, forthcoming from Common Courage Press.

**"ministry" Focus on the Family, whose merchandise filled one tent. A second tent featured exhibits of other ministries, mostly foreign missions. Most of what they offered was free.**

**The Promise Keeper tent displayed row after row of merchandise on cafeteria tables—baseball hats, football jerseys, golf shirts, jackets and sweaters, all available in several different styles and emblazoned with the "Promise Keeper" logo. There were also Promise Keeper mugs, pens, books and videos as well as CDs and cassettes of the greatest hits of past Promise Keeper rallies.**

**The Promise Keeper edition of the New Testament, *Promise Keeper: Man of His Word*, makes the Good Book look like a cross between a product catalog and *Sports Illustrated*. Interspersed between the books of the Bible are personality profiles of prominent Christian athletes. And at the end, right after the Book of Revelation, there are ads and tear-out cards for Promise Keeper products—including an opportunity to "Save On Promise Keeper New Testaments By The Case" ($35 per case of 20; $75 per case of 50).**

**Finally, there was a Promise Keeper merchandise mart on the floor of the Carrier Dome—roped off on two sides, with banks of cashiers on either end. At one point, "Bob," the MC for the event, made his way from the stage to conduct a guided tour of the merchandise, which attendees watched live on giant TV screens visible from every part of the stadium. Bob showed off some of the Promise Keeper books, videos and CDs for what he called a home-improvement "tool box." Then the crowd rushed down to shop. The best deal? A hard-cover edition of the organization's founding document, *The Seven Promises of a Promise Keeper*—only $5.** —F.C.

"For those who are tired of waiting for political change and want to start making it happen, the New Party is the place to be."
—Jim Hightower

"The most promising effort to build a progressive labor and community-based political party in the United States is the New Party."
—Elaine Bernard, *Why Unions Matter*

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CULTURE WARS

# A weak read

***Chastised by the GOP's meltdown,* The Weekly Standard *has lapsed into inconsequential cultural sniping.***

By Tom Frank

It shouldn't be hard to dislike *The Weekly Standard.* Launched at the high tide of Republican triumphalism in late 1995, the magazine rather pompously claimed as its mission "to speak for, interpret and guide" the "conservative realignment" of our republic wrought in the previous year's elections. Edited by William Kristol and John Podhoretz, two children of prominent neoconservatives (along with Fred Barnes, the Beltway dullard whose high journalistic rank has puzzled observers for years), and backed by insidious media baron Rupert Murdoch, the *Standard* seemed as combative as the caricature of Newt Gingrich, girded Rambo-style, that graced its inaugural cover.

And yet, as the *Standard* approaches its first anniversary, it has yet to descend into the lunkheaded ogreness that so many expected. The magazine has scrupulously avoided not only racism and sexism, but virtually all of the intellectual trappings of the old loony right. Nor has it been entirely predictable: In addition to standard targets such as Ross Perot and Bill Clinton, it has relentlessly trashed Pat Buchanan and Bob Dole. Although its first months were plagued with bad writing and gross copy-editing errors, the *Standard* has since become the slick and occasionally clever voice of a new species of conservatism, a magazine that owes much more to the Peretz-era *New Republic* than to conservative predecessors like the stuffy and shoddy-looking *National Review*, the small-town suspicion-monger *Reader's Digest* or the raving, anti-Semitic *American Mercury* of the 1950s.

For dyed-in-the-wool conservatives, last fall was a heady time indeed. Led by a book-reading Speaker of the House, the nation seemed to be undergoing nothing less than an intellectual sea-change. The years of exile were over at last. Conservatives were returning from the wilderness, and *The Weekly Standard* was going to lead them in rebuilding Washington, D.C., as the New Jerusalem. As a token of the new conservative millennium, the magazine embraced an inside-the-Beltway tone that, until 1994, was anathema to the anti-government crowd. The attitude befit a publication for conservatives who were in power, not just backwoods cranks. The *Standard* swelled with advice for lawmakers, campaign-insider gossip and intimations of scandal.

But the magazine's editors had something even grander in mind. Not only would the *Standard* celebrate the blessings of conservative government, it would chronicle the thinkings and doings of a conservative intelligentsia. Like *The New Republic*, the *Standard* aspired to be a magazine of weighty cultural commentary. The work of dissolving big government and giving free rein to the market was important, to be sure, but reversing the cultural decay that most conservatives believe to have set in during the 1960s was an even graver task. As David Brooks put it in a January essay, the crucial issue of our time is "how to re-moralize society and how to build character in the young."

The tone of triumph continued through February, when the magazine's cover carried the words "WE WIN" in gigantic type above Clinton's famous pronouncement, "The era of big government is over," which it described as "the surrender of modern liberalism." But like Newt Gingrich and his congressional minions, the *Standard* had its cockiness sorely tested in the face of the right's twin debacles of early 1996—the Republicans' catastrophic budget showdown with Clinton and the triumph of Pat Buchanan's assault on free trade in New Hampshire. Chastened, the *Standard* even allowed itself a gesture of self-mockery in the



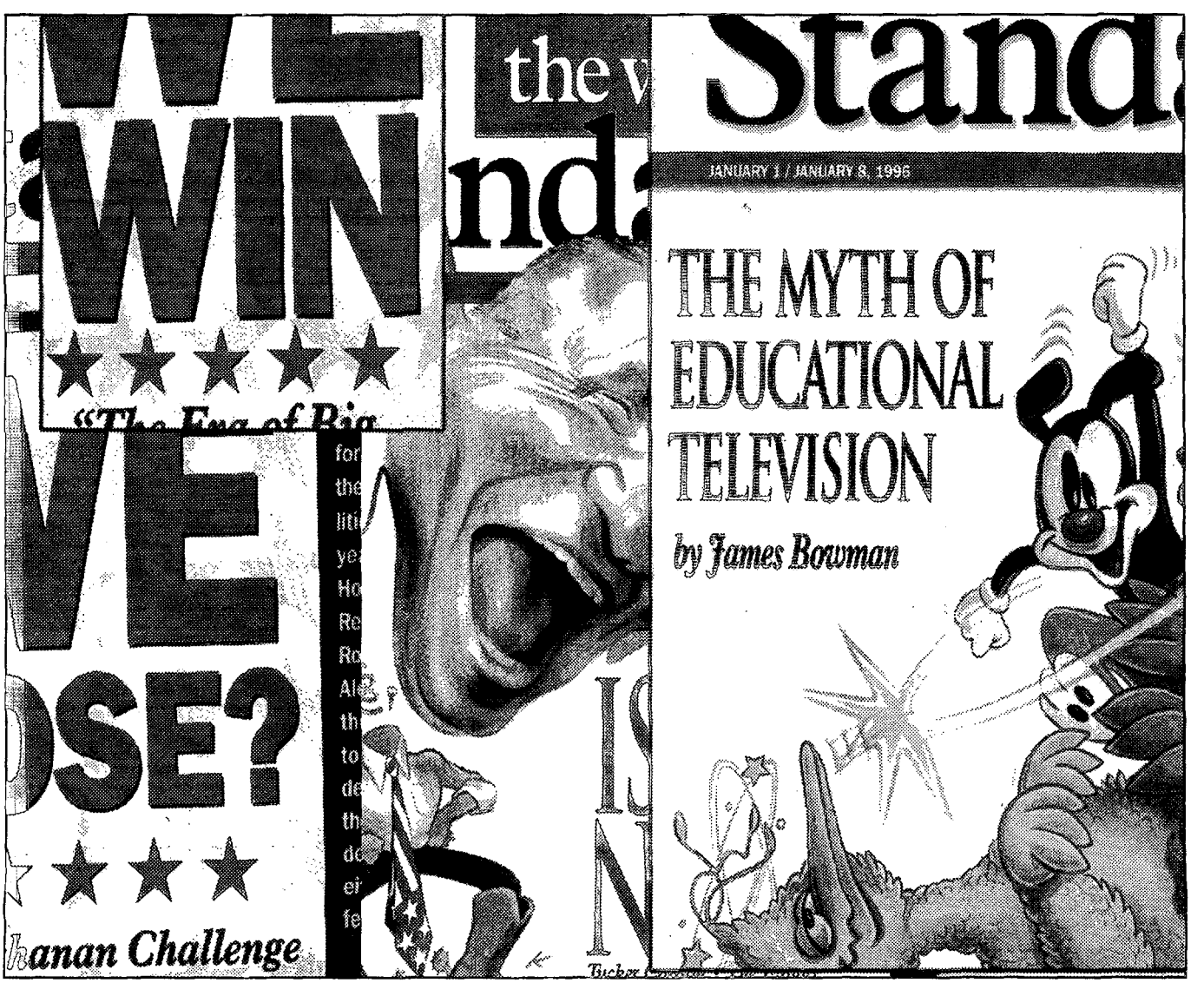
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aftermath of Buchanan's primary victory. Lampooning its earlier boasting, it ran a cover headline that read "We Lose?" And, almost reflexively, the *Standard* responded to the GOP meltdown by redoubling its savage offensive in the culture war. Cultural issues, as the magazine never tires of repeating, are the single reed upon which Bob Dole's electoral aspirations hang.

But culture, it seems, is what conservatives do worst. Try as it may to present itself as a *Partisan Review* for the free-market crowd, the *Standard*'s cultural commentary is for the most part weak and embarrassingly naive. Although the magazine's cultural offensive starts from an obvious-enough point (America has many problems, like urban decay and poverty and murder), it never gets much beyond Manichean reductionism and a sort of attenuated red-baiting. The *Standard*'s editors seem to believe culture can be understood the same way politics can: Simply transpose the battle between liberals and good guys onto matters of literature and TV, and always—always—be on the lookout for sub rosa cultural treason. What unites such disparate figures as deconstructionists and pragmatists, John Dewey and Eric Hobsbawm? They're "liberals."

The *Standard*'s critical style could be called "The New Inconsequence," in which the purpose of cultural commentary is not to make meaningful observations about the workings of society, but to stigmatize particular individuals or groups of people. The *Standard* is on a witch hunt to expose those old bugbears, "political correctness" and liberal bias in the media. Each issue comes with at least one installment in the uncovering of the nefarious conspiracies. Phil Donahue is a liberal, the magazine revealed in February. So are the pusillanimous people at Disney who have watered down the classics of Kipling and Twain. So is the guy who does the letters column in *Parade* magazine. (Who knew?) And whenever a Standardite happens across a public forum featuring a leftist author, readers are in for another routine denunciation: By promoting his or her work—a nakedly commercial activity—the leftist in question has somehow been caught in a damning double-bind.

The magazine is at its best when it's scoffing at prevailing






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pieties, blasting celebrity profiles in *Vanity Fair* or lampooning sanctimonious, feel-good spectacles like the recent "Stand for Children" rally in Washington. The *Standard*'s cultural critics run aground, however, when they attempt to move beyond scoffing and consider more seriously just what has gone wrong with our culture. Too many of its writers are content to lapse into boilerplate moralizing. Our culture is bad because the people who make it are bad people! Journalists are selfish; they think more of themselves than of their subject or their audience. The magazine's worst writing in this vein has to be Andrew Peyton Thomas' almost unbelievable appeal to "Generation X" in the January 1 issue. Arguing that we live in a time of "reduced economic opportunities," Thomas lectures his "cohort" on the sinfulness of wanting something better. "Seeking vainly to keep up with the standard of middle-class prosperity" is simply another species of "materialism," he writes, a product of "self-indulgence and pleasure-seeking." The answer to our problems is not to carp about the injustices of the market. It's to be more moral.

The problem here, as almost any reader of the *New York Times* "Business Day" section could tell, arises from the simple fact that culture is not just a projection of the liberal authors, the Phil Donahues and Dan Rathers that the *Standard* loves to excoriate; it's a product of the marketplace as much as Time Warner itself is. Either there's something deeply wrong with the theory of the market as agent of democracy, or some other aspect of the *Standard*'s cultural critique has to give.

One senses that the *Standard*'s editors, if pressed, would willingly resolve the contradiction by ditching their "morality" bluster for a more tenable free-market species of conservative cultural criticism. Two articles in particular, both featured on the magazine's cover, come close to advancing such a critique. In a long piece on children's television, media critic James Bowman concludes that market-driven cartoon shows produced by Steven Spielberg and the Fox network deliver the goods to kiddies much more efficiently than the sacrosanct Public Broadcasting System. Bowman argues, moreover, that the feast of media intertextuality these productions offer actually helps children to "develop a sense of irony that happily alerts them to crude attempts at indoctrination or to the hypocrisies of their elders." By elders Bowman means, of course, the hated "baby boomers."

Even more revealing is Michael Anton's April 15 cover story on "The Hyper-Entertaining of America," which appears to be the first (and possibly the only) time the *Standard* has noticed many of the truly bizarre aspects of postmodern public culture. Anton blandly observes that Niketown, Virgin Megastores, the Mall of America and Los Angeles' City Walk have eclipsed the shopping thoroughfares of old. He marvels bemusedly at Planet Hollywood and the Hard Rock Cafe. He uses the term "Disneyfication." He even seems, at first, to be slightly taken aback by the phenomenon he calls "hyper-entertainment." But then he lowers the boom on those who believe Americans "would be at home reading Shakespeare if only these damnable vulgar distractions weren't out there tempting them out of their library chairs": They're high-culture snobs needful of a few lessons in market democracy. Maybe mass culture was once crappy stuff, forced down our throats by ignorant Hollywood execs. But with "the science of demography"—the science, you might recall, that made Willie Horton a household name—entertainment engineers can now "pinpoint with great accuracy not only what people want but what they're willing to shell out for." The result? "The first truly popular culture in human history." Let other Standardites deplore the vulgarity of rap music or the destruction of the English literature canon (as another did in the *Standard*'s pages less than a month later); Anton protests that such elitism has no place in a market-driven culture.

In the real culture wars of our time, as even some *Standard* writers may now admit, entertainment conglomerates are winning stunning and incessant victories over every form of local or independent cultural production. The resulting contradiction in the right-wing position is obvious and divisive: If the *Standard* wants to celebrate mass culture as an expression of a democratic market, consistency will force the magazine to jettison its assorted soft-sided baggage concerning "leadership," the "Founders" and "values." But what's consistency in the middle of a revolution? Just as Republican legislators have played both sides of the issue—winking here at the exploits of the media trusts, denouncing TV values there—maybe the *Standard* can have it both ways. Maybe its pronouncements are as irrelevant as the ethereal content of the "hyper-entertainment" Anton describes. So what if it decries the lowest-common-denominator journalism that Murdoch himself perfected? The *Standard* isn't advancing a coherent position as much as it's giving its demographic exactly the cultural fantasies it wants: pointless epiphanies about the "gravitas" of George Washington, thundering editorials about the sanctity of the family and the market. Blame it all on "liberals," and damn the intellectual consequences. We all know there won't be any. ◄

**Tom Frank** is editor of *The Baffler*, a Chicago-based magazine.

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RUSSIA

# Russia reneges on democracy

*The participation of U.S. consultants in the Russian election had a pernicious effect on an already deeply flawed process.*

By Fred Weir
MOSCOW

It was a marriage made in hell, a kind of Machiavelli meets Godzilla thing. Some say it altered the course of history.

Last February, four sleazeball U.S. political consultants (all Republican) were hired by Boris Yeltsin's floundering re-election team to help kick the commies into history's dustbin and slam down the lid. Ensconced in Moscow's presidential guest house, the Americans quickly cottoned to the power-hungry and profoundly corrupt instincts of their Russian hosts, but found them hopelessly innocent of modern public-opinion manipulation techniques. Worse still, the "classic Soviet mind-set" of Yeltsin's team counseled political conciliation and at least an appearance of fairness. In a flurry of translated memos, the "California boys" hooted down the Russians' reservations about using dirty tricks, sternly advised against a candidates' debate or any campaign discussion of substantive issues, noted the need to vigorously squeeze "democratic alternatives" to the incumbent president out of the race, and devised a brilliant strategy to terrorize Russian voters with the specter of civil war if they failed to re-elect Yeltsin. Thanks to those tactics, they pulled their candidate back from the brink of electoral defeat. At least that's the way *Time* magazine tells it in a July 15 cover story by its top political columnist, Michael Kramer.

*Time*'s tale has been vigorously trashed by other journalists and academics, who don't deny the Americans were present on the Yeltsin team but argue that their role was peripheral and incidental to its ultimate triumph. The consultants, they say, bamboozled not the Russian electorate but *Time* magazine. "Their story is not quite 'The Making of the Russian President,' but it is an example of yet another modern American campaign technique—'The Selling of the Consultants,' " scoffed *New York Times* Moscow correspondent Alessandra Stanley.

In an angry letter to *Time*, Michael McFaul, a Stanford University political scientist and expert at the Carnegie Endowment in Moscow, charged that the story "insults the intelligence and sophistication of the Russians who really orchestrated the campaign victory." McFaul argues that U.S. public relations techniques have percolated into Russian political culture through a wide variety of sources over the past five years, and that no one needed to show the 1996 Yeltsin team how to use polling data or stage a telegenic event.

"While the Yeltsin campaign appears to have broken numerous election laws during the presidential election, this was not new—they repeated practices we observed in the parliamentary elections in December 1993 and December 1995," says Robert McIntyre, a fellow at the Institute for Policy Studies (IPS) in Washington and an official U.S. observer to every Russian election since 1993. "Perhaps, in this case, American consultants added some new detail or nuance to the Yeltsin manipulation of the media and control of information reaching voters. But they probably had nothing to do with the central decision-making process."

Perhaps the real question is: Was Yeltsin's defeat of his Communist opponent, Gennady Zyuganov, the triumph of democracy that was touted around the world? The answer on that count is decisively no.

According to *Time*, Felix Braynin, a Soviet emigré to the United States with close contacts in the highest Kremlin circles, brought the consultants on board. The government paid the "hired guns" $250,000 for their services—a stag-



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gering one-twelfth of the Yeltsin campaign's total legal spending limit—and gave them an open budget for conducting polls, focus groups and other research. The group that came to Moscow included Joe Shumate, a data-analysis expert and former aide to California governor Pete Wilson; George Gorton, a Wilson political strategist; and Richard Dresner, a Republican consultant who claimed links to U.S. President Bill Clinton's inner circle. The team later hired Steven Moore, a public relations specialist.

From the beginning, then-first deputy prime minister Oleg Soskovets warned the consultants: "One of your tasks is to advise us, a month from the election, about whether we should call it off if you determine that we're going to lose." *Time* indicates that the warning made the consultants quite nervous—though obviously not enough to refuse the job.

The *Time* story suggests the American officials' advice undermined and even subverted democratic values. In fact, their very presence in the Yeltsin campaign team flagrantly violated Russian law, which prohibits foreigners from direct involvement in elections.

According to *Time*, these men found the Yeltsin campaign in total disarray, riven with factionalism and incapable of discerning how much trouble its man was in. The American team was the first to realize Yeltsin didn't have a prayer of winning on his record in office. His only recourse, they advised, was to "go negative"—to focus the campaign on anti-communism rather than issues.

While no one needed to teach Yeltsin and his entourage anti-communism, the message clearly needed refining for an audience that was fed up with four years of fruitless market reforms and nostalgic for the security and stability of Soviet times.

The consultants boast that it was they who located the average Russian's raw nerve: fear of civic upheaval and violence. This claim is absurd—any Russian schoolchild could have pointed out the same thing. But the Americans no doubt had a role in crafting the blitz of pithy Willie Hortonesque attack ads that reached a crescendo just before the election's second round. These ads typically featured a stark and gut-wrenching image from the deep Soviet past of civil war, famine or prison camps. "The Communists haven't even changed their name. They won't change their methods," went the deep-voiced narration. "'Stick with Yeltsin and at least you'll have calm'—that was the line we wanted to convey," *Time* quoted Shumate as saying of this campaign.

No doubt the Communists have a great deal to answer for in Russia's tortured past. If they had been given the chance to respond, democracy might have been well served. If there'd been an objective, accessible media and a level playing field, Zyuganov might have shouted the Russian equivalent of "It's the economy, stupid!" and kicked the ball back. But an open public debate was never permitted to develop, and in the absence of a fair contest, the sophisticated, American-inspired techniques looked more like a barrage of Soviet-style agitprop—with a Pepsi Generation hue—than a democratic electoral process.

"American practice is bad enough when both sides can use it," says Robert McIntyre from IPS. "But when it is used in the context of a media monopoly, as it was here, it subverts the principle of free choice and makes a mockery of public discourse."

The European Institute for the Media (EIM), which monitored the campaign on behalf of the European Union's Tacis Democracy Program, determined that in Russia's 1996 presidential election "candidates were less free to get their views across and voters were given less information of a professional and objective nature" than in the last election under Communist rule in 1991. The Russian media, after a brief burst of wide-open pluralism in the late Gorbachev era, has slipped back into the orbit of the state and the new power of big money.

The two state-owned broadcast networks, ORT and RTR, were totally subordinated to the exigencies of Yeltsin's re-election campaign, while Russia's only privately-owned network, NTV, fell under tight control after its chairman, Igor Malashenko, joined the Kremlin team in March, the EIM report said.

In an interview with two EIM monitors, Valery Kucher, head of the Russian government's department of information (responsible for supervising the media), said: "We're not going to give the Communists equal time and conditions. They don't deserve it. They're an unconstitutional party."

The American consultants didn't mind state domination of the media, but they did criticize the Yeltsin team's fuzzy TV ads. Moreover, they complained, coverage favorable to democratic opponents of the president, such as the liberal Grigory Yavlinsky, was all-too-frequently finding its way onto the air.

"It was ludicrous to control the two major nationwide television stations and not have them bend to your will," *Time* quotes Dresner as saying. And in a memo to Yeltsin, the consultants said: "Whenever an event is held, care should be taken to notify the state-run TV and radio stations to explain directly the event's significance and how we want it covered."

On one point the Americans were emphatic: Under no circumstances should Yeltsin agree to a public debate with Zyuganov. "He would have lost," *Time* quotes Gorton as noting. They needn't have worried; the Russians had that base fully covered.

In early June, Zyuganov was granted the second of two televised interviews with NTV's premier political commentator, Yevgeny Kiselyov—practically the only such exposure the Communist leader received in the entire campaign. In the midst of being roasted by an imperious, hectoring Kiselyov, Zyuganov pleaded with him to use NTV's influence to insist on an open public encounter



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between himself and Yeltsin "to dispel falsifications, to let people evaluate for themselves." Yeltsin would listen to an appeal from NTV, Zyuganov said. After all, hadn't Kiselyov, just days before, held an intimate tête-à-tête interview with the president? "You say you stand for civilized values, well, candidates debate each other in civilized countries, don't they?" Zyuganov asked. Kiselyov grimaced and for a moment looked almost shamefaced, then shrugged and said, "He's the president, he doesn't want it. And that's that."

The Yeltsin campaign also bribed print journalists en masse to burnish the president's image and to plant phony, slanderous stories about Zyuganov. Yelena Dikun, an analyst with the weekly *Obshaya Gazeta*, estimates that the Yeltsin campaign funneled $15 million—or five times its legal campaign spending limit—into a special slush fund for this purpose. In early July, the *Washington Post* calculated that Yeltsin's handlers were spending $100,000 per month in Moscow alone to buy journalists' affections. About 50 big names were paid as much as $5,000 monthly (the average Russian salary is around $120 per month), but hundreds of others regularly received smaller amounts.

That might shed some light on the flood of mendacious propaganda that choked the Russian press in the months leading up to the election. Anti-Communist polemics—allegations that the party was preparing to murder its opponents once it won power, restore the prison camp system, crack down on free travel, seize private property and ban food imports—often masqueraded as news items. For instance, one article in the Moscow evening paper, *Verchernaya Moskva*, quoted an unidentified "high official of the Communist Party" as saying the party intended to redistribute housing in the capital to favor the poor—a plan that would bring a "flood of depraved, unfortunate provincials" into Moscow. "Editors rarely gave the Communists the right to reply," notes the EIM report.

Finally, there are strong indications that the vote for Yeltsin was secured, at least in part, by tactics that belong to the arsenal of authoritarian, not democratic, governments. "In [the Russian republic of] Tatarstan, there was evidence of intimidation with local officials threatening to cut off gas in rural areas if people did not vote for President Yeltsin," noted the final statement of the 500-member observer's mission for the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe. "In [the republic of] Bashkortostan, local administration officials were instructed by representatives of the president to secure a better result for President Yeltsin—with thinly veiled threats on their jobs. ... In Moscow, the city council put pressure on shops and restaurants in the city center to display posters which, though ostensibly aimed at increasing voter turnout, were thinly-veiled pro-Yeltsin propaganda."

Observers also noted that the Yeltsin team displayed complete indifference to legal campaign spending limits. If Zyuganov—who had little money anyway—had done so, he would certainly have been prosecuted.

"The *Time* story on the American consultants raises some important issues about where democracy is headed in both our countries," says McIntyre. "The fairness of Russia's electoral process was deeply compromised by technocrats who believe that winning justifies any sort of manipulation, fraud or coercion. Those are the things we should focus on instead of arguing over who deserves the credit for making the election a sham."

In the end, the Russian people were not deprived of their right to vote—although that option was held in reserve until the last moment. Their right to make a fair and open choice, however, was deeply, perhaps fundamentally, compromised by a regime that hungers for the trappings of democratic legitimacy but has an obvious and arrogant distaste for democratic practice. ◀

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HEALTH

# Gotta match?

***Industry documents show Clinton administration strategies to "prevent smoking" mimic tobacco company schemes to promote it.***

By Mike Males

If Bob Dole epitomizes the old school of tobacco promotion (pass the money, and hey, it's not that bad for you), Bill Clinton represents the modern stratagem of using public warfare to mask private accommodation. The half-dozen scattershot proposals recently issued by President Clinton and Food and Drug Administration (FDA) Commissioner Donald Kessler under the rubric of "protecting kids from tobacco" pose no threat to a $47 billion industry with 50 million customer-addicts.

Recently revealed tobacco industry documents show a remarkable resemblance between the industry's cigarette promotion strategies and the tactics the Clinton administration proposes to "fight teenage smoking." Newer studies, including Stanton Glantz's *The Cigarette Papers* and tobacco historian Richard Kluger's *Ashes to Ashes*, indicate that, with few exceptions, today's government health agencies are no longer committed to stamping out the nation's worst addictive killer.

After donning a stern anti-tobacco countenance early on, Clinton turned around and dumped "smoke-free society" policies wholesale, declining to lead a broad-based attack on the social acceptability of smoking.

The president abandoned his 1992 campaign pledge for a 75-cents-per-pack federal cigarette tax increase. He refused to sign an executive order banning smoking in federal buildings. Public smoking bans and Occupational Safety and Health Administration proposals to restrict workplace smoking were put on the back burner even though, according to Glantz, they have been proven to be "the best predictor of progress in smoking cessation."

The president, citing the industry line on saving "family farmers," endorsed the existing policy of granting tens of millions of dollars in annual federal subsidies to tobacco growers and emphasized the importance of tobacco to state economies.

Effective anti-tobacco tax and regulatory measures have been replaced with cosmetic controls unsupported by research but well-suited to industry promotional schemes. As Glantz points out, the once-successful society-wide anti-smoking message "has been eclipsed by a less potent—and probably counterproductive—one: 'We don't want kids to smoke.' "

Clinton and Kessler proposed a series of new anti-smoking measures: banning tobacco promotions from caps, T-shirts and sporting events; restricting signs and vending machines; managing tobacco as a drug only with regard to teenage smoking; mandating a $150 million-per-year industry-run ad campaign to discourage young people from smoking; and requiring that cigarette ads in publications with large youth readerships consist only of black-and-white text.

The strategy's defenders argue that 70 to 90 percent of adult smokers began to smoke before age 18. If teens can just be cut off from access to tobacco and cigarette promotions, they claim, smoking, cancer and tobacco moguls will fade away.

But the problem, Glantz warns in the February issue of the *American Journal of Public Health*, is that there is no practical way to bar youths from cigarettes when they are freely available to adults. Clinton's plan upholds the illusion that the tobacco industry most prizes: that smoking is an acceptable, "integral part of life." The president has publicly defended adult smoking, including his own cigar habit, as reasonable.

"As the tobacco industry knows well," concludes Glantz (whose research so threatens cigarette hawkers that they repeatedly tried to get lawmakers to defund him),



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"kids want to be like adults, and reducing adult smoking sends a strong message to kids about social norms." Teenage smoking is thus in conformity with—not in rebellion against—adult behavior. Teenage smoking, for instance, closely parallels smoking by parents. Studies show that children of smoking parents are two to four times more likely to smoke than children of nonsmoking parents. Exempting adult smokers from policy attention therefore guarantees more teen smokers. If smoking remains socially acceptable for grownups, Glantz argues, then "preventing teen access to cigarettes" represents a "trap" that "reinforces tobacco advertising."

The industry has proven Glantz's point by eagerly joining the anti-teen-smoking chorus. RJ Reynolds and Philip Morris have already produced a slew of ads echoing, almost verbatim, Clinton's claim that only "adults are capable of making a decision to smoke." Tobacco lobbyists, appointed by pro-tobacco Arizona Gov. Fife Symington, refocused the state's anti-smoking program on preventing children from smoking. Tobacco industry pressure on Massachusetts' health department refashioned a strong campaign against the social acceptability of smoking and secondhand smoke into one aimed solely at stopping teenagers from buying cigarettes.

After California imposed a 25-cent cigarette tax in 1989, the industry upped its campaign contributions to state lawmakers ten-fold. The result: During the early 1990s, Gov. Pete Wilson and state legislators dumped a powerful statewide campaign against smoking at any age (including billboards warning parents that when they smoked, their children "smoked" too). In its place, they launched a campaign aimed only at preventing teen smoking. In 1995, California cigarette consumption (which had fallen by two billion packs from 1989 to 1994) stopped declining.

These new campaigns seek to protect teens from a predatory tobacco industry. In fact, there is little reason to believe that teens are more vulnerable than adults to industry promotions. Recent studies contradict stereotypes of teens as reckless and impressionable. For example, psychologist Nancy Adler's studies found that adolescents calculate risks just like adults do.

Nevertheless, Clinton's health agencies and the media relentlessly and falsely claim that teenagers succumb to the lures of irresistible tobacco ads, rampant pro-smoking peer pressure, and "wildly popular" cigarette glamour. In fact, more than 80 percent of teenagers don't smoke. As Glantz points out, anti-smoking campaigns should stress that teenage peer pressure is to "be a nonsmoker." Since teenagers are the age group least likely to smoke and most likely to endorse strong anti-tobacco policies, they are potentially the strongest allies for campaigns that treat them with respect.



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Instead, administration and health-lobby strategy has narrowed to a single focus: Smoking exists because dumb-ass teenagers obey cartoon camels and grizzled cowboys. Although most anti-smoking groups and the media present this claim as gospel, little evidence supports it. In the June 24, 1992 issue of the *Journal of the American Medical Association*, researchers admitted they had not documented that "cigarette advertising [has] an independent effect on the initiation of smoking." In June 1996, after intensive effort, researchers admitted to the *Los Angeles Times* that they were still unable to show that advertising lures teens to light up.

What tobacco ads have been shown to influence is brand choice among the fraction of teens who already smoke. For instance, Camel's "Old Joe" character did help the company capture a larger share of the teen cigarette market. Such jockeying for greater market share explains why the industry defends its ads even as it falsely claims they do not target young smokers.

What does the industry most fear? First, higher cigarette taxes. For instance, Glantz reveals a 1973 study by Brown & Williamson in which the tobacco behemoth worried that anti-smoking groups would discover that "one of the most successful methods of reducing the use of tobacco products will be the enactment of a high rate of taxation." The butt-dousing effect of higher taxes was proven by the huge nosedive in Canadian smoking (down 70 percent among teens and 50 percent among adults from 1978 to 1993) following its $2-per-pack tax hike in 1979.

The tobacco industry is also afraid of an anti-smoking strategy that characterizes smoking as unacceptable, unhealthy behavior for adults and children alike. In 1984, U.S. Surgeon General C. Everett Koop launched a broad-based attack, especially on "passive smoking," aimed at achieving a "smoke-free society" by the year 2000. Lashing cigarette companies as "sleazy ... false, and deadly," Koop popularized a message that went to the core of the tobacco issue. "The tobacco industry went wild and aggressively attacked Koop," Glantz reports.

Sharp increases in state tobacco taxes, bans on smoking in public areas, and simultaneous messages urging adults to quit and teens to refrain reinforced the concerns of the health-conscious society of the 1970s and '80s. Despite $100 billion in cigarette ads and promotion between 1975 and 1992, smoking plummeted 60 percent among teens and 40 percent among adults.

Then progress ground to a halt. Common Cause, a Washington-based group that advocates campaign-finance reform, reports that the tobacco industry stepped up its political donations, giving $7 million to Republican and $2 million to Democratic campaign committees between 1985 and 1995.

The administration has moved on several fronts to exploit poll findings favoring crackdowns on teen smoking. In Congress and the White House, anti-smoking policy shifted away from Koop's visionary stance and toward the usual politics of placating the powerful while scapegoating the unpopular.

Clinton officials ignored crucial findings on the effects of the smoking of adults—and particularly parents—on child health even as they announced their mission to "protect children from the awful dangers of tobacco." The administration ignored a Yale University finding that nonsmoking children of smoking parents were twice as likely to develop cancer as nonsmoking children of nonsmoking parents, as well as a review in *Pediatrics* linking adult smoking to problems for children, including increased mental retardation, ear, throat and respiratory illnesses, and hundreds of child deaths each year from lung disease and fires.

In an Orwellian reversal of reality, Kessler now describes smoking as a "pediatric disease" caused by children's unhealthy behavior. Clinton's ex-Surgeon General Joycelyn Elders, in the 1994 report "Preventing Tobacco Use Among Young People," dismissed adult smoking and the dangers of secondhand smoke, and declared that the unhealthy proclivities of "young people" were the only real problem. The report's technical appendix, read by few, told a different story: Research strongly supported the paramount influence of family and parental tobacco use on youth smoking.

Unless anti-smoking groups "step back from the current preoccupation with youth and return to a more balanced and sophisticated tobacco-control program," Glantz laments, "we will look back on the mid-1990s as a time that the tobacco industry once again outsmarted the public health community."

A decade after Koop's historic call for complete elimination of a product that kills 400,000 people yearly, Clinton has quietly reinstated the industry as a permanent American fixture. The administration has sidestepped effective measures while it has loudly championed policies unlikely to work. Today's Clinton-GOP-tobacco shell game is a political bonanza. Everyone champions "protecting children." Everyone respects "adult rights." Clinton wins press accolades and poll points. Politicians win by raking in tobacco donations, governments by collecting tobacco taxes, and farmers by reaping tobacco subsidies. Smokers win presidential approval as "mature," get to buy a product federally taxed less in real dollars today than 40 years ago, and receive a respite from more restrictions. Tobacco-industry giants win the official stamp of corporate legitimacy, gain a hiatus from real anti-smoking strategies, and enjoy signs that smoking is on the rise again.

And the losers? Most of all, the teenagers and children who are subjected to years of health damage from breathing secondhand cigarette smoke in their homes during childhood, and who are then blamed for taking up a habit mass-advertised to them as "mature" and "adult." These are the same young people the Clinton administration insists it wants to "protect." ◀

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LABOR

# Beyond the minimum wage

***Congress helped some workers by passing a minimum-wage hike, but stronger measures are needed to restore wage growth across the board.***

By G. Pascal Zachary

Sal Albanese was too busy to celebrate on July 9 when the U.S. Congress approved the first increase in the federal minimum wage since 1991. Instead, the New York City Council member was lining up the votes needed to pass a living-wage ordinance that will effectively double the meager wages paid to thousands of temporary and contract workers employed by the nation's largest city.

Many of these workers earn just $4.25 an hour and receive no health benefits or vacation time, despite in some cases having worked for years on city business. "Raising the [federal] minimum wage is fine," says Albanese, a Democrat from Brooklyn. "But there's a lot more we can do to lift the living standards of American workers."

For many progressives, the rise in the federal minimum wage from $4.25 to $5.15 by next July underscores the limited nature of the Democratic Party's attack on wage stagnation. The proposed increase is a huge victory for the lowest-paid workers—who number about 10 million, or 8 percent of the U.S. work force. But it does nothing for the much larger group of workers who earn more than the new legal minimum and see little hope of increasing their stagnant wages.

President Clinton offers two answers to the problem of stagnating wages for the majority of Americans: Workers must improve their skills, and employers must realize that it is in their best interest (and in the interest of the country) to pay higher wages. Such advice, while making for good media soundbites, obscures more than it illuminates. Employers usually refuse to cover the costs of training, and most low-skilled workers can't afford to pay for it. Government training programs, meanwhile, are dicey; despite good intentions, bureaucrats have a woeful record of discerning which job skills the market actually values. The president's preaching about the virtues of paying higher wages is simply naive; it flies in the face of a growing tendency for employers to relentlessly adjust wages (usually downward) to reflect what they view as the economic value of a specific job. The problem is that corporations are often rewarded for cutting wages, and Clinton's appeals won't make them less free to do so.

Rather than stake their hopes on such voluntarism, activists around the country are pushing a variety of legal measures that would directly improve worker pay and narrow the disparity between the highest- and lowest-paid Americans.

"With the passage of the federal minimum hike, there's a tendency now for people to think we've already won," says Richard Holober, an official with California's AFL-CIO. "The challenge now is to keep the issue [of wage stagnation] in the news."

Here are some of the more promising areas where labor advocates are applying pressure:

**•Higher local minimum wages**

Early this year, when it looked like a Republican-controlled Congress would never agree to a higher federal minimum wage, advocates in some Western states brought the question of higher minimum wages directly before the voters in the form of proposed ballot initiatives. While Congress' reversal took some steam out of these local efforts, several are still moving forward because they call for a higher minimum wage than the federal government requires. Voters in the state of Missouri and in the city of New Orleans, for example, will get a chance in November



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to raise the basic wage to more than $6 an hour.

The most closely-watched ballot fight is expected to occur in California, which has the highest concentration of low-wage workers in the nation. The November ballot will carry a measure that would raise the state minimum in two steps to $5.75 an hour by March 1998. Supporters of the measure, led by the state AFL-CIO, say their own polls show overwhelming public support for the increase. Chain restaurants and most other businesses in California that rely on low-wage labor oppose the hike, but Holober, director of the AFL-CIO's pro-initiative campaign, says the federal increase actually undercuts the rhetoric of those who oppose local initiatives. "Now the opposition is going to have a tougher time trying to whip up the hysteria required in order to raise the money needed to defeat us," he says.

**•Living wages**

Cities, counties and states increasingly rely on subcontracted and temporary workers in order to gain flexibility and cut labor costs. But non-professionals who perform public services without actually being on the government's payroll invariably earn lower wages and receive worse benefits than permanent civil servants.

To remedy this, a growing number of local governments are studying proposals to impose a higher minimum wage on their outside labor suppliers. Last year, the cities of Baltimore and Milwaukee raised the minimum for many contract workers to more than $6 an hour. On July 11, Albanese's colleagues on the New York City Council backed the most ambitious "living-wage" plan yet, agreeing to effectively double wages paid to contract security guards, clerical workers, food preparers and janitors. Having secured a 41-to-7 vote in favor of the pay hike, advocates of the measure appear to have the support necessary to override an expected veto by Mayor Rudolph Giuliani.

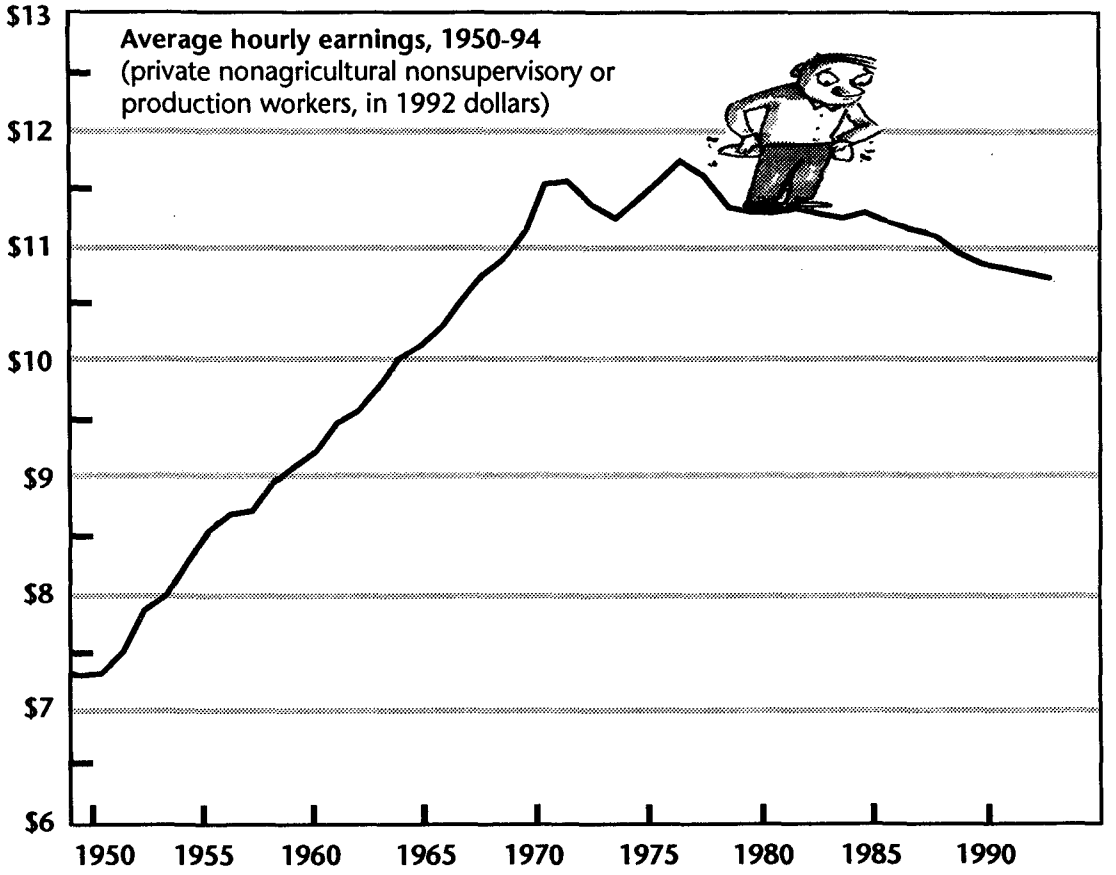
"This is a moral victory for workers in this city," says Albanese. "It shifts the tide from the direction of a low-wage economy to a living-wage economy."

The New York vote also suggests that a broader "living-wage" movement is gaining momentum. Days after the vote, Albanese visited members of the Chicago City Council, which is considering a similar measure. So is the city of Los Angeles. Los Angeles council member Jackie Goldberg says the city could raise pay for thousands of its contract workers as early as August or September.

**•Workplace enforcement**

Perhaps the quickest way to improve the pay of low-wage workers is to tighten enforcement of federal and state laws covering overtime and minimum wages. A recent article in the *Wall Street Journal* found widespread evidence of employers refusing to pay the mandated time-and-a-half wage for hours worked beyond 40 in a week. The article cited one study by an employer group that estimated unpaid overtime to U.S. workers at a staggering $19 billion annually, which exceeds the estimated expense to businesses of raising the minimum wage by 90 cents.

Employers have failed to comply with the overtime law for a number of reasons. To start with, in the nearly 50 years since the law was enacted, the distinction between rank-and-file workers and managers has blurred significantly. Many employers and employees alike are confused about whether they are entitled to overtime. But equally important, the sheer cost of overtime has driven many companies to violate workers' rights. Pressed to do more with smaller






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budgets, managers often discourage employees from claiming overtime pay.

Workers can file lawsuits to recover unpaid overtime, but such disputes may prove costly. In one recent case, the Seattle Supersonics basketball team fired ticket sellers, allegedly in response to their complaints about not receiving overtime pay to which they were entitled.

The U.S. Department of Labor, the agency charged with enforcing overtime laws, has just 800 inspectors in the field. Despite the steady rise in the number of employers, the department has scaled back its field staff by about 15 percent since 1990. Congress, meanwhile, sought unsuccessfully this year to reduce the department's enforcement staff even further.

With scant hope of gaining more money for enforcement, Labor Secretary Robert Reich has launched a public relations campaign aimed at shaming some of the worst labor-law violators—mainly clothing makers who supply name-brand stores and celebrity fashion lines such as Kathy Lee Gifford's—into greater compliance. Again relying on a spirit of good will, Reich is encouraging big corporations, especially in the sweatshop-rife garment industry, to hire their own outside inspectors to monitor scofflaw contractors.

### ◦Union protections

Another bulwark of a high-wage economy is union membership. Collective bargaining doesn't usually lead to big raises immediately, but over time it improves wages. However, in order for unions to capitalize on their growing popularity with workers, stronger protections are needed to prevent employers from firing workers who participate in union drives or vote for union representation.

Richard Bensinger, the AFL-CIO's chief organizer and formerly head of the Organizing Institute, says that among all industrialized nations the United States offers the weakest protection against employer reprisals for union activity. Without such protections, even successful union drives can leave workers in a legal limbo for years.

Consider the behavior of Case Farms, a poultry producer in Morganton, N.C., that employs about 600 chicken-processing workers. In June 1995, the workers decisively voted to join the Laborers Union in hopes of raising their roughly $6-an-hour wages and easing harsh working conditions. More than a year later, Case Farms refuses to recognize the union despite being ordered to do so by the National Labor Relations Board.

The poultry producer has instead filed suit in federal court in a hopeless but time-consuming bid to void the election. And its firing of dozens of union supporters looks suspiciously like retaliation. "There's no other reason why they won't take me back," says Miguel E. Esquivel, a union backer who was let go after the election.

Worker advocates argue that without changes in federal labor laws, such firings will continue. To be sure, under current law, wrongly dismissed workers can be reinstated if the courts find they were illegally dismissed. But such cases often take years to decide, and by then support for a union may have collapsed. Unions say that employees who clearly win a representation election should at least be able to obtain a contract without first having to settle a myriad of arcane legal issues. At least that way employers would have to pay first and litigate later.

With unions and the AFL-CIO playing a more prominent role in the 1996 election season, many in the labor movement hope the Democrats will be more inclined to consider these issues. But in the past, Clinton has backed away from worker concerns whenever it meant clashing with the agenda of big corporations. Consider his failure to propose a single measure that would strengthen the decimated rights of workers to organize on the job. Consider his unwillingness to support proposals, backed by a minority of both Democrats and Republicans, to curtail the ability of corporations to legally import foreign labor into this country at cut-rate wages. Finally, Clinton and his advisers have failed to provide disadvantaged blue-collar workers any real alternatives to the angry nativism promoted by Pat Buchanan.

These failures are not insurmountable, as evidenced by the victory on the minimum wage. But for advocates of higher pay, the question now is whether they have spent their political capital or are still expanding it. ◀

G. Pascal Zachary, based in Berkeley, Calif., writes often about labor and economics.


URPE SUMMER CONFERENCE

The Union for Radical Political Economics invites you to attend its annual summer conference for 1996.

From Saturday, August 24 through Tuesday August 27, academics and activists interested in a left-oriented analysis of economic issues and political topics will meet at one of the nicest summer camps in western Connecticut, Camp Chinqueka in Bantam, Connecticut.

This year's conference theme is The New Class Warfare and there will be three plenary sessions: The Right on the Rampage, What's Left of Liberalism, and People Under Siege and in Struggle. Speakers include Jane D'Arista (EPI), Elaine Barnard (Harvard Trade Union Program), Allen Charney (DSA Director), Harry Magdoff (Monthly Review), Mike Albert (Z Magazine), Jerome Scott (Project South), and others.

There will be many other daytime workshop sessions, ranging from formal presentations of academic papers, through panel discussions by activists and interested laypersons. Please contact Dawn Saunders,(dsaunders@moose.uvm.edu) Dept. of Economics 475 Main St., University of Vermont, Burlington, VT 05405 if you would like to present material or organize a session.

A special series of sessions, featuring Sam Bowles (UMass) among others, will discuss the impact of the work of David Gordon (1944-1996), a prominent radical economist and a co-founder of URPE.

Social events will follow each evening session, and camp activities (swimming hiking, volleyball) are available during the day for kids and adults. Rates include a bunk in a camp cabin (or tent space), and food in the camp mess hall.

For further details, contact the URPE National Office at
One Summer Street, Somerville MA 02143, (617) 776-5888
Email: urpe@igc.apc.org

URPE SUMMER CONFERENCE




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IN THE ARTS

# Pretty vacant

**Trainspotting *presents the drug-crazed, dead-end world of latter-day Scottish punks—drained of the incendiary rage that made punk vital.***

By Linda DeLibero

With the likes of Patti Smith and John Lydon hitting the comeback trail, it's inevitable that a film version of *Trainspotting*, Irvine Welsh's best-selling novel about neo-punk junkies, would pop up just about now. The action takes place in the present, but the movie resonates with the grim spirit of '76, and the hero's ironic rallying cry ("Choose life. Choose a job. Choose a career....") might have emanated from the sneering lips of Mr. Rotten himself. Although the press will raise a ruckus over *Trainspotting*'s laissez-faire attitude toward heroin, the real question is whether the film can deliver the insides of a death culture with the kind of fearless intensity of the original punk masters.

*Trainspotting* recounts the days and nights of five working-class lads from Edinburgh—not the tourist's postcard of fairy-tale castles and kilts but the grimy city of anonymous grey tenements and the perpetual dole. Here, there is no real working class anymore, because there's just no work. Not, at least, for Renton (Ewan McGregor), the film's narrator and hero, nor for his loose collection of ratty friends, most of whom devote their waning energies to scoring and shooting smack. Like Welsh's novel, the film is a series of episodes based around Renton & Co.'s half-hearted efforts to quit the habit, their relapses, their restless wanderings around the clubs of the city and, most importantly, their beatific release after drug hits bloodstream. We're treated to hefty portions of Renton's voice-over narrative, which comes pretty straight from the book: rapid-fire musings on his philosophy of addiction and the no-future landscape of post-Thatcher Britain, which is pretty much the same as the no-future landscape of Thatcher's Britain. The big difference between Renton's crowd and the punks of 20 years ago is that the incendiary anger is missing. Except for the dangerously menacing Begbie (Robert Carlyle), whose rages are fueled not by numbing smack but alcohol, these guys are just too hapless and tired to promote anarchy in the U.K.

The film's director, Danny Boyle, carefully avoids the traps of sentimentality and sensationalism with a twitchy, high-energy style intentionally at odds with his listless subjects. Accompanied by a booming mix of old punk and new Brit-pop tunes, the film glides with the same cool insouciance from buffoonish sequences of the friends' sexual exploits to scenes of sheer horror. That distance all but forbids judgment on the viewer's part; we're asked to see heroin as the inevitable alternative to the Big Nothing that rewards clean living. But while Boyle's refusal to moralize about the dangers of heroin is refreshing and admirable, it leaves no place to wedge a scrap of feeling into the film's hard surface. No matter what you see on screen—a dead baby, a bloody bar fight—you feel as indifferent as the camera recording it all. Critics on both sides of the Atlantic have slammed the movie for cutting out the darker parts of the novel and glamorizing the addict's life. But it's hard to see what kind of audience would take these characters as offering some sort of blueprint for cool. They all look, frankly, like shit, and when



**Trainspotting**
Directed by Danny Boyle



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Renton dives head-first into a toilet full of his own excrement—or pops that dirty brown liquid into his vein—you aren't exactly moved by the allure of the forbidden.

And maybe that's the problem. *Trainspotting* pays blatant homage to a number of boys-in-the-'hood films, most notably *Goodfellas* and *A Clockwork Orange*, from which Welsh, too, obviously drew inspiration. Begbie's antecedent is clearly Joe Pesci's psychopathic Tommy DeVito, and Renton's pal Spud (Ewen Bremner) is cousin to Dim, the similarly thick-witted droog of *Clockwork*'s protagonist, Alex. The tributes are underscored by visual references as well, such as when Boyle freeze-frames on an irate Begbie (à la *Goodfellas*) so that Renton's voice-over can deliver an insight. But the references don't enrich our viewing experience as much as they should; rather, they make us wish we were watching those other movies instead. When the camera slowly dollies toward Spud and Renton slumped against each other at a local bar, it's an ironic inversion of *Clockwork*'s opening shot—Korova milkbar phrases loom on the wall behind them, in case you didn't get it. But where Alex's menacing stare should be, we see two pathetic, deflated specimens, shouting through the din about sexual frustration and Iggy Pop. The contrast between Kubrick's malevolent youths (or, for that matter, Scorsese's wiseguys) and these poor slobs reminds us of everything that's been drained from the addict's life by his habit. Violence doesn't thrill him, nor really does music, the aesthetic pleasure of choice for aspiring young punks. At least Alex had Beethoven and Sid Vicious had Sinatra.

Through completely opposite means, Kubrick and Scorsese both impel an audience to enter and accept forbidden subcultures on their own terms; this is what *Trainspotting* wants from us, too. We do accept Renton and his friends as they are—we even understand why they're addicts. But there's no moment when we feel the pleasure the characters feel; we have to be told that heroin is a high a thousand times better than an orgasm. The film is so determined to keep you at arm's length that there's no visual equivalent to that euphoria, and no awful realization that you're enjoying something you shouldn't. When Renton quits his habit cold turkey, we're treated to the requisite pink-elephant horror show, this time with the dead baby crawling the ceiling and Begbie's ugly face between the sheets. The soundtrack throbs, the room shrinks and expands, and we wait patiently for Renton to have done with it. The episode has a rote quality to it, and a kind of bland ugliness that makes you want to nod off until it's over.



Renton (Ewan McGregor) and Sick Boy (Johnny Lee Miller) in *Trainspotting*.

©1996 LIAM LONGMAN/MIRAMAX FILMS

The same is true of the characters, all of whom you feel sorry for, and none of whom you really want to know much about. Ewan McGregor's Renton has a certain sardonic charm; often, he's downright funny. But he's not quite compelling enough to carry us through this numbing landscape, just as Begbie's raw hatred is too much like the drunk's at the end of the bar to be fascinating. You want to walk away. In the end, the film makes you feel about the characters the way it makes you feel about drugs—you certainly don't feel shocked or horrified by them, but you don't feel particularly interested in them either. *Trainspotting* tries to walk the fine line between those two poles, and in that respect, it's an admirably nervy failure. But the terror and power of the void aren't in this film quite enough to make us care; better to go home and dust off that old copy of "God Save the Queen," Rotten style. ◀



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IN PRINT

# A clean, well-advertised space

By John Palattella

If one perused *SkyMall*, a free quarterly read by 835,000 airline passengers daily, without knowing that it's a catalog, one could easily mistake it for a survival manual, misplaced, perhaps, by a combatant from the information economy's Hobbesian wars. "Associates" hounded by bosses for not entering data while answering phones can don Ultralight Pro, a featherlight headset that promises a productivity gain of at least 20 percent. And bosses burdened with flabby chins can strap on ChinGym, a miniature weight-lifting system that tones neck muscles.

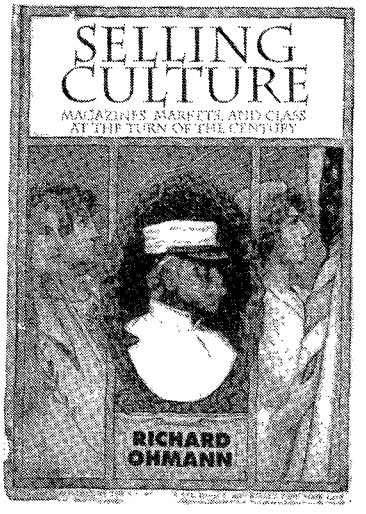
*SkyMall* could also be mistaken for one of the national newsweeklies passed around by flight attendants. After all, *SkyMall*'s astonishing array of commodities fulfills many of the functions traditionally performed by the editorial content in magazines. There's an advice section (The SyberVision Personal Achievement Series), a culture bureau (IntelliQuest's audio outlines of the world's 100 greatest books), and a home and garden section (an insect vacuum on sale).

It's hardly surprising that catalogs and national magazines blend into each other since both conform to the same mass-marketing logic. Advertising executive James Collins spelled out that logic when he testified before Congress in 1907, at a time when monthlies like *McClure's* were reaping amazing profits on a ten-cent product because they had perfected the recently devised mass-circulation formula. "A magazine," Collins explained, "is simply a device to induce people to read advertising. ... The entertainment department finds stories, pictures, verses, etc. to interest the public. The business department makes the money" by selling a product—the attention of readers—to advertisers.

Richard Ohmann's *Selling Culture* is a sophisticated history of the revolution in manufacturing and publishing that made ad executives like Collins and publishers like S.S. McClure the custodians of American mass culture. Ohmann sets the stage for mass culture's emergence in the late 19th century, when entrepreneurial capitalism was being ravaged by its own success. Capital accumulation occurred at an unprecedented pace, yet the flow of goods to consumers was volatile. Factories habitually overproduced goods to undersell the competition. Overproduction flooded markets, which led to price cutting and speculation. The boom-bust cycle drove the economy into a severe depression in each of the century's last three decades. These depressions, in turn, threatened profits. To stave off losses, capitalists connived to squeeze more work out of laborers at reduced wages. Massive strikes erupted in response to these wage cuts.

To extricate themselves from such crises, the masters of production learned to become the engineers of consumption. If a capitalist could predict the volume of sales by bringing goods to the attention of massive groups of consumers, he could calibrate demand and cut losses. If he could control consumer needs by identifying and managing them, he could fend off competition and create a more stable business environment. And if he could maintain stability, he could even control militant laborers, placating grievances about undemocratic shops with the promise of better wages and access to consumer goods.

All these possibilities were in fact realized, Ohmann hypothesizes, because capitalists ran brand-name advertisements in mass-circulation magazines that catered to the emerging professional-managerial class. To secure a foothold in markets, manufacturers relied on ads that taught that the consumption of certain kinds of products was a way of life: One needed not just oatmeal, but Quaker Oats; not just water, but Londonderry Spring Water. The professional-managerial class—made up of the advertisers, engineers and accountants who ran the capitalist enterprises—was eager to absorb the lessons of advertising precisely because these individuals were severed from traditional patterns of domestic life. Increasingly, the professional-managerial class worked in the city and resided in the suburbs, apart from the working classes it managed. A suburban existence didn't afford Americans time or




**Selling Culture: Magazines, Markets, and Class at the Turn of the Century**
By Richard Ohmann
Verso
411 pp., $27.95



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resources to produce staples at home, a mainstay of domestic life through the mid-1800s. Altogether, efficiency in the factory, the market and the home demanded the production of brand-name convenience products.

Convenience brought prestige. Brand-name advertising, Ohmann writes, was a new social language produced by and for the professional-managerial class, one that connected its members to social situations, to each other, and to their desires. Although ads, which addressed a ubiquitous "you," beckoned to any reader, they showcased a mass culture reserved for a specific group of Americans. Ads exploited new illustration and layout techniques to create vivid tableaux that lent gentility to mundane commodities such as oatmeal and water. Brand-name advertising placed handsome, moderately wealthy white people at the center of a handsome, white, commodified world.

Incredibly, ads evoked this world without hinting to readers that their lives would be disastrous if they lacked it. The scare tactics and personal remedies lodged in contemporary advertising do not figure in turn-of-the-century ads. Absent are warnings about the odors festering in the body's every crevice and orifice; premonitions about undetected soap scum exiling relatives from home; frights about flabby chins.

Advertising without Gothic overtones, without hip irony? To a modern consumer, such notions seem almost inconceivable. But Ohmann, mustering exhaustive research and a knack for making fine distinctions, proves that turn-of-the-century ads were indeed categorically buoyant—largely because the power of the professional-managerial class was as yet uncontested. Larded with images that flattered and charmed, ads delivered an ascendant class to a world of golden light and few shadows.

Even though brand-name advertising was used by capitalists to control markets, Ohmann does not contend that it was a capitalist conspiracy to control minds. A key premise of *Selling Culture* is that "ads worked because they met consumer needs as they shaped them." Ads both extended a vote of confidence to the professional-managerial class about its newfound social place and provided a link to the convenience goods that were necessary in order to inhabit that place.

*Selling Culture* is the latest entry in a fast-growing canon of histories about advertising and consumerism. It distinguishes itself from other recent books on several key points. For one, Ohmann revives the phrase "mass culture" to define advertising's origins and consequences. Ohmann talks about "mass culture," not "popular culture," because the former evokes the homogenization that the culture industry has inflicted upon the nation's local populations for a century. Although Ohmann concedes that "mass culture" wrongly implies audiences are passive and uniform, he insists the concept is worth retaining because it underscores a social fact that celebrants of "popular culture" ignore: Though imbued with liberal notions of individual freedom and choice, consumer culture thrives on stark inequalities of economic power. By Ohmann's lights, to confuse the consumption




**Pears' Soap ad,** *McClure's,* **October 1899.**

ethos with personal expression or popular democracy, as James Twitchell's *Adcult USA* does, exacerbates the culture industry's trivialization of politics.

"Mass culture" signals Ohmann's intention to restore an understanding of institutional power to the story of advertising, which places him in the company of historian T.J. Jackson Lears, author of the widely acclaimed *Fables of Abundance.* (See *In These Times,* June 12, 1995.) But Ohmann and Lears differ over the narrative dimension they lend their histories and the moral lessons their tales endorse. Theorizing about why mass culture emerged from economic crisis, Ohmann makes the upwardly mobile readers of mass-circulation magazines the protagonists of *Selling Culture.* He acknowledges, however, that he could have just as easily cast



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commodities, editors or writers in that role because all three equally embody the emergence of mass culture. Consequently, Ohmann fantasizes that his ideal cultural history of the period "would be multi-dimensional, multi-perspectival, non-linear."

Although Ohmann's argument is itself linear—moving from the primary economic causes of mass culture toward contingent social causes and mere effects—his exposition of causes approaches his ideal. *Selling Culture* is tessellated with detail like a Flaubert novel—but absent Flaubert's drive to shock the bourgeoisie. "You may resent commodification," reflects Ohmann, "but you can't argue with it, and you can't help practicing it, short of heroic abstentions or retreats." Ohmann forsakes a crank's crusade to grasp epochal change in all its dimensions.

In his 1994 book *Fables of Abundance*, Lears leaves ample room for arguments with commodification because the story he tells about advertising is one of decline and alienation. In his view, the transition from entrepreneurial capitalism to consumer capitalism is a fall from advertising's early 19th-century mysteries into the iron cage of corporate efficiency. Lears detests in the advertising industry everything Ohmann's professional-managerial class prized: banality, routine, progress. And Lears is invigorated by the work of novelist Henry James and artist Joseph Cornell because it affirms the value of what poet Wallace Stevens called "the necessary angel"—the unruly imaginative power to reclaim an exotic refuge from an enervated world. Lears, allowing that aesthetics can assuage the vacuousness of consumer society, links the modernist artist with the republican moralist.

Oddly enough, Lears, the Rutgers historian, celebrates modernists who decried the corporate rationalization of American culture, while Ohmann, the Wesleyan English professor, is obsessed with pinning down the logic of class formation and consumerism. Ohmann, in fact, does proffer a notion of cultural resistance, albeit one less adventurous than that of Lears. Commodification may be ineradicable, Ohmann ventures, but ideology—the beliefs and values that enlisted the professional-managerial class in the consumerist enterprise—is hardly beyond rebuke. Ideology, Ohmann proposes, "always is contested, if not on different pages of the same magazine then in other magazines and papers on offer at the same newsstand and through the same postal system."

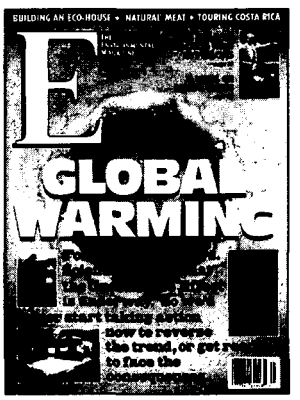
Lears, weighing the costs of consumption to imagination and character, wants to storm the barricades of consciousness—which is what advertising reminds us to do, too. For Ohmann, rebellion is latent in ideology, which is like a cultural unconscious, a snarl of contradictions seething beneath the veneer of consumerism. How to explain or exploit these contradictions? Ohmann doesn't say. His is a quiet and long revolution, one fought with theoretical caveats. ◀

**John Palattella** is an editor for special projects at *Lingua Franca*.


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# The year of living dangerously

By **Catherine Mason**

Referring to the year of the return of Halley's Comet, Virginia Woolf famously declared that it was "in or about December 1910 that human nature changed." Since then, historians and authors have tried to pinpoint the date that the Western world seemed to transform itself from the relative peace and complacency of *La Belle Époque* into a period of personal and political anxiety that culminated in the earth-shattering violence of World War I.

The most broadly useful works, such as Modris Eksteins' *Rite of Spring*, or Roger Shattuck's *The Banquet Years*, tend to highlight the artistic and cultural changes that fall under the rubric of modernism. Thomas Harrison's new study, *1910: The Emancipation of Dissonance*, argues persuasively that this year, in which "nothing [was] definitively over and nothing definitively begun," is as good a date as any to mark the start of the final century of the millennium.

Harrison's argument does not lie with the timing but with the location and features of Europe's modernist revolution. He dismisses the centrality of Paris and its expatriate mélange of avant-garde styles, and moves the locus of modernity to the German and Austro-Hungarian cities of the Expressionists.

Contrasted with the experimentalism of French movements—from the formalism of Cubism to the ironic playfulness of Dada—art in Central Europe in 1910 looked deadly serious. Expressionism in all its forms—as dissonant music, poetry, painting, nihilistic philosophy, even sociology—represented the "spiritual prefiguration of an unspeakably tragic fatality," the last gasp of a pained self-awareness before the deluge of World War I.

Such fatality was presaged not only by the kind of ghoulish self-portraiture we see in the work of the Viennese painter Egon Schiele or the composer Arnold Schoenberg (as pictured on the book's dust jacket), but in the high incidence of suicide and madness in artists in the decade that began in 1910. The author explains the combination as the result of an alienation between self and society particular to his subjects' time and place. Included in the discussion of renowned artists and thinkers from Dresden, Berlin, Vienna and Munich are two innovative, if obscure purveyors of what he calls "nihilistic idealism": poet Scipio Slataper and writer and painter Carlo Michelstaedter.

Significantly, both artists came from a historically contested area bordering Italy and what was then the Hapsburg Empire, was later Yugoslavia, and part of which is now Slovenia. Slataper's Trieste and Michelstaedter's tiny home city of Gorizia stand as symbols for Harrison's argument for the centrality of Expressionism to the modern mind. Here, Paris' peaceful and tolerant mix of nationalities and styles looks frivolous compared to the historical turmoil on that fringe of territory that was at once Italian, Jewish, German and Slavic.

Certainly the ethnicities of that region are as jealously guarded today as they were in 1910, and after two world wars and many civil disturbances, the citizens of these border cities now, as then, feel the tensions in their very souls. Back then, Slataper chose to treat this instability as an advantage, identifying Triestine art as international in style, without chauvinism or self-interest, but pure and truthful.

For Carlo Michelstaedter, himself a product of warring ethnic ties and Jewish besides, such cultural and political marginalization weighed more heavily. At age 23, hours after completing his dissertation entitled *Persuasion and Rhetoric*, Michelstaedter committed suicide. It was for this act as much as for his work that Harrison cites the young artist as a casualty of understanding whose death stood as a prescient "critique" of the atrocities to come.

Of course, such anxiety also characterized the morose *Sturm und Drang* side of the Romantic movement as far back as the late 18th century. The two elements crucial to the definition of Expressionism—the Gothic sense of doom and decay and the revolt against the classical harmony of body and soul—were especially evident in German poetry just before the French Revolution and the sweep of Napoleonic wars and reform.

Harrison could have made more of this tie to the past, although contrasting that era with the circumstances surrounding the birth of the modern political era and artistic modernism would certainly have diluted the author's claim to the unique context of 1910. Still, the historical pull between "Enlightened" and "Romantic" thinking, which dates from the dawn of the development of the individual at the turn of the 19th century, represents a key feature of Harrison's




**1910: The Emancipation of Dissonance**
By Thomas Harrison
University of California Press
264 pp., $30



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Expressionism at the turn of the 20th.

Arnold Schoenberg's deliberately incoherent musical experiments were an attempt at what he called "the emancipation of dissonance," which the author further defines as a "willful disruption of order." Such dis-order or dis-harmony is of course the opposite of what art traditionally strives for. Expressionism's first principle, then, was a belief in the clash of diametrically opposed ideas that are as immutably joined and separated as the two sides of a coin. Gone was the give and take dialectic of 19th-century philosophical idealism.

Contemporary Europe was itself riddled with potentially explosive dichotomies, from bitter class struggle to localized battles for ethnic autonomy and the expansionism of imperialism. Thriving as it did on contradiction, Expressionism was very much a product—if an eerily perceptive product—of its historical circumstances. Harrison introduces each of his characters in turn, clearly and concisely dealing with each artist's philosophical contrarieties and how they reflected their circumstances. Generally, he concludes, since it was beyond Expressionism's desire or ability to resolve these antipathies, its very existence held the roots of its inevitable demise.



**Oskar Kokoschka, *Self-Portrait* (Poster for *Der Sturm*).**

Failure proved inevitable because each time the Expressionist artist faced two warring principles—life and death, despair and happiness—he (and the examples are all men) chose the darker element. In striving to depict the relativity of truth and reality, they rejected the rational and conventional world of the conscious mind in favor of experimentation in the dangerous world of Freud's unconscious or the spiritual world of Theosophy and other irrational philosophies. Thus we can interpret the painting of Oskar Kokoschka and Egon Schiele as the anguished visual manifestations of the id unable to overcome the guilt of the superego, or the occasionally exultant transcendence in the work of Vasily Kandinsky or Franz Marc as poignant in light of how subsequent events would quash their anti-materialist visions.

Where is a serious artist supposed to locate being after the physical laws of the universe are usurped by Einstein and the nature of human motivation is subverted by Freud (to name only two of the most significant cracks in the facade of Western civilization in 1910)? When the foundations of material truth are shaken, the abstract artist Kandinsky maintained, "the man's gaze turns away from the external toward himself." Harrison's most striking chapter recounts the means that artists and writers engaged to reach the soul. Their efforts are moving because it was only for a brief time that any thinking person could ignore historical and political imperatives as mere "cluttered externals" (in sociologist Martin Buber's words) in the quest for meaning.

Ultimately, all this subjectivity—if it is not merely random (as even Schoenberg and Kandinsky insisted, art must not be)—must lead to what Harrison refers to as a crisis of "misunderstanding." The creation of meaningful expression in the absence of objective meaning revealed a paradox not lost on the generation of 1910. Expression, if it is to make an impression, requires symbols, language, encoded knowledge that can be transferred in order to be communicated. Imaginative changes take place in the ethical (what is conveyed) or the aesthetic (how it is conveyed) realms that ultimately depend upon explanation. Thus the spiritual intent of Expressionism is externalized. So although the generation of 1910 may have succeeded in extinguishing the necessity of resolution in their art, they remained unable to convey an alternative within the shared language of art.

Harrison makes a fair argument that this century's final decade is a "mirror image" of the first. His characters' tragic sense of the irrevocable pull of oppositional forces stands in a pointed contrast to our own concern for comfort and easy answers. The Expressionists of 1910 saw what we refuse to see—that a blind philosophy of optimism and progress is not only intellectually limiting but tragically wrong-headed. The postmodern world holds as many dichotomies as its modern predecessor—only our responses have changed. Irony masks serious debate. Our obsession with youth and the extension of life, the jingoistic rhetoric over abortion and the right to die, even our willful impatience with the social and spiritual causes of suicide and drug abuse are the obverse of the Expressionists' honest preoccupation with death and decline in response to the dissonance of modernity.

Yet the author must concede that even in 1910, such acute self-knowledge remained isolated to a precious few, and once achieved, did nothing to extricate them from its morass. These disaffected young artists were themselves the product of a renowned age of progress and self-satisfaction. Although art is today, for the most part, a by-product of capitalism and created for material ends, one has only to listen to the pensive lyrics of contemporary alternative rock music (to stick to the author's emphasis on youthful expression) to recognize that unresolved and unresolvable existential conceits will always concern a certain segment of perceptive individuals. ◀

**Catherine Mason** is a historian and writer specializing in cultural and women's history.





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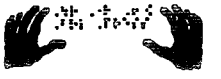
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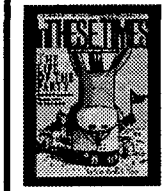
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*Continued from page 40*

and add these barbs to jazz up a light summer piece about vacations, presidents, public transportation and the progress of the American Dream of transforming human and social relations into commercial transactions.]

Of course, to live vicariously amid all this folderol, it helps to actually get to the island of Martha's Vineyard. The celebs deliver themselves thither by way of corporate jets and friends' yachts. The rest of us, ranging from the wretched of the earth to the merely rich, are obliged to take public transportation in the form of the car ferries operated by the all-powerful Steamship Authority.

These doughty vessels sail from Woods Hole, a pretty village full of those people from high school who actually became marine biologists. But before you can go, you have to have a reservation. Without one, you're a "standby," meaning that you will have to wait for passage until October or, even worse, for six or seven hours.

The trouble with making a reservation is that it requires economic planning and involves big government and is therefore socialistic. You have to decide well beforehand what you want to do (go to the Vineyard) and when and for how long you want to do it (say, Tuesday to Saturday of the third week in July). Then you have to call the dreaded big brother Steamship Authority and beg some bureaucrat commissar reservations clerk to allow you to travel on those days. Of course, the clerk smirks and says, No!

After savoring your anguish for a bit, the clerk tells you that you can, of course, call back every 15 minutes or so for the next three months in hopes of catching a cancellation. What makes this all the more aggravating is that the Steamship Authority is one of the few such organizations remaining on this side of the planet that does not have a toll-free telephone number.

This, no doubt, is to discourage hate calls.

Happily, however, we live in a country where there are always private solutions to public problems. Of course, they don't really solve the problems; they're not supposed to. What they do do is turn the problem into a money-making opportunity and make a few individuals richer.

Along about the same time last year that the Republicans took out a contract on the federal government, an enterprising couple from Alexandria, Va., who have a summer house on Martha's Vineyard, took out a contract on the Steamship Authority. They set their computer to work hacking the Steamship Authority's reservation system. They developed a data base of ferry users and wrote a program to cull cancellations by calling every 15 minutes and turning them into bookings, which they held in their own electronic inventory.

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This, of course, is nothing but an alienated cyber-version of the hands-on racket of the ticket scalpers who ply their wares outside of sports arenas and concert venues. But the ferry rides ain't rock 'n' roll or an afternoon at the ball game—they're public transportation. Apart from its ever-increasing hordes of celebs, rich bastards and yuppie scum, the Vineyard is home to 9,000 year-round residents, including lots of poor folks. The reservation rip-off limits their ability to travel freely in favor of those willing and able to fork over a fee. What we have here is a throwback to the early 19th century, with toll roads for the moneyed classes and shun pikes or, in this case, rowboats for the impecunious.

This parasitism masquerading as free enterprise is possible only because the Steamship Authority's computer system is old and clumsy in its ability to track block-bookings. It needs an upgrade, including a free wait-list service. That would put the Ferry Exchange out of business. The Authority, jealous of its prerogatives, promises to do this by next summer.

If this situation does straighten up and I can be assured of easy access to the island, I've come up with a money-making scheme of my own aimed at fleecing the swells. I'm going to buy some white bread, pickle relish, catsup, beef fat and marshmallows, all the cheapest supermarket brand, of course. I'll dump the stuff on the bread slices, cut them into quarters, and sell them across the road at the farmer's market as Aunt Martha's Traditional Up Island Savory Surprises for, say, $10 a square. I'll have a nice sign saying "Bill Clinton can't keep his hands off them." ◁





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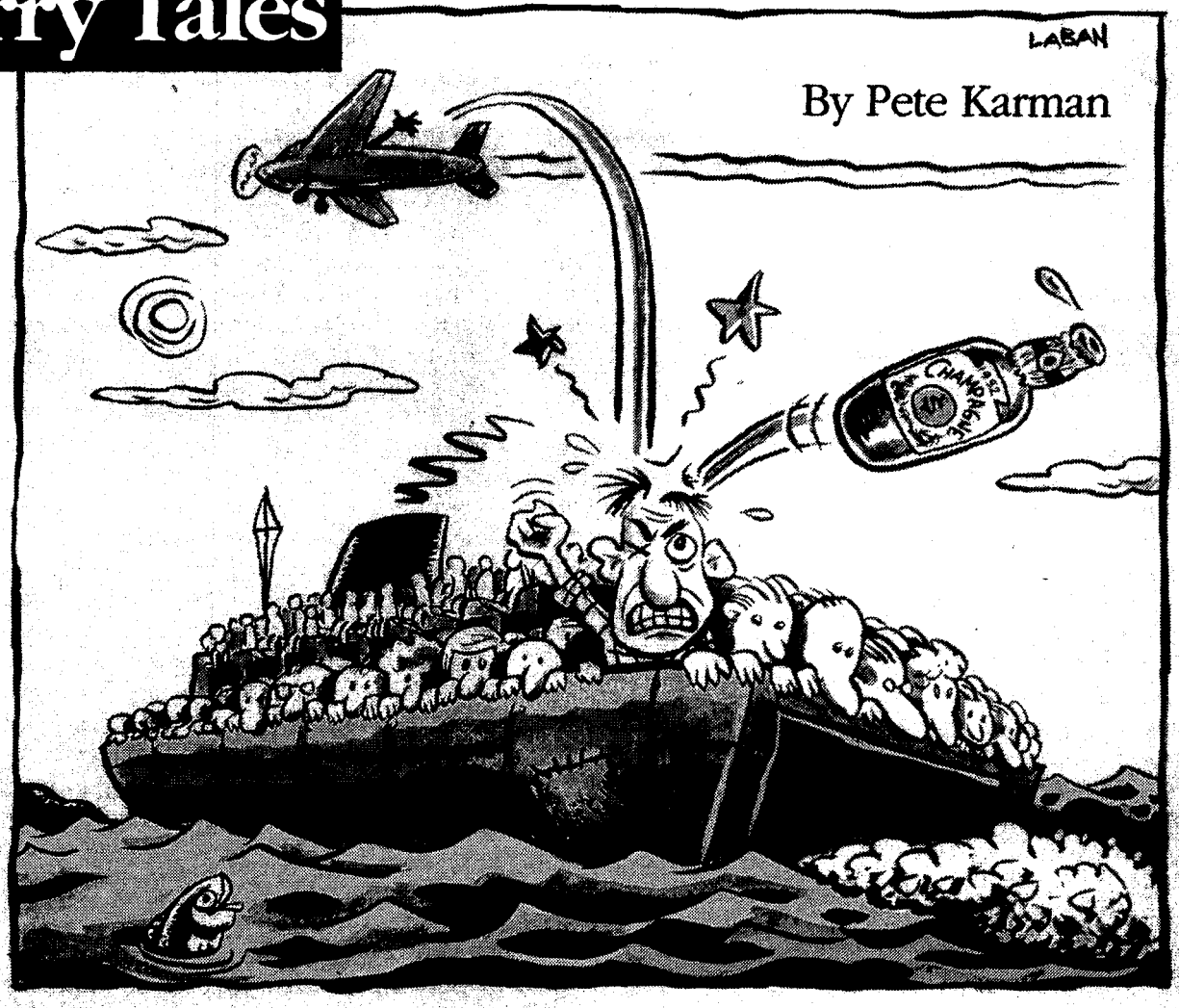
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# Ferry Tales

By Pete Karman




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It's a known fact that few Americans purchased insurance to protect themselves from the depredations of attack rabbits until that unfortunate incident with President Jimmy Carter. By the same token, when George Bush went gastro in Tokyo, the disposable bib industry was able to expand its franchise beyond lobster joints to Japanese restaurants. Medical journals report that if, say, the chief executive gets a hang nail, hang nails instantly become the locus of health science. Experts sprout on the morning news shows, research budgets soar, and the Hang Nail Foundation sees a flood of contributions and volunteer clippers and filers.

Likewise, when presidents go on vacation to a "summer White House," that appellation bestows tourism cachet rivaling that of New Jersey. Lyndon Johnson's leisure stops in Austin inspired a generation of slackers. Gerald Ford made Vail the in place for clumsy outdoors types. Thanks to George Bush, the preppier parts of Connecticut and Maine are luring hordes of blue-blazer-and-Beefeater-gin wannabes.

Martha's Vineyard, off Cape Cod in Massachusetts, was for a couple of summers the dilatory domicile of the Clinton family. This brought in the big-time media, and thus a resort island already overstuffed with celebrities and their gawkers became even more engorged. Having married into an unfamous Vineyard family (still demeaned as alien estivators by the insulars despite their half century as smallholders), I have had the opportunity for a front-yard view of this lemming-like phenomenon.

Over the years, I have been able to watch the glitterati rumble up in their Beamers and Rovers to the Saturday farmer's market across the road to buy Tisbury produce at Tiffany prices. Down at Alley's Store, I could shell out for an autographed jar of one of Carly Simon's You're So Vain skin-care products. I could ride my bike up island to John Belushi's or Lillian Hellman's grave at Abel's Hill Cemetery, or down island to the zillion-dollar mausoleum-cum-mansion that the ghostly-looking Mike Nichols and Diane Sawyer have built at Tashmoo. I could spot Vernon Jordan's red Caddy convertible tooling down the Edgartown Road, and I could swear that I had seen Spike Lee rollerblading in Oak Bluffs. I could even hear gossip that Lady Di or Billy Joel were on the island. I could be told for the umpteenth time the favorite Vineyard joke: The difference between a Lexus and a porcupine is that the porcupine has the pricks on the outside.

[*Author's note:* I, of course, have no truck with this crowd, let alone with tabloid journalism. I merely drop these names

*Continued on page 39*



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